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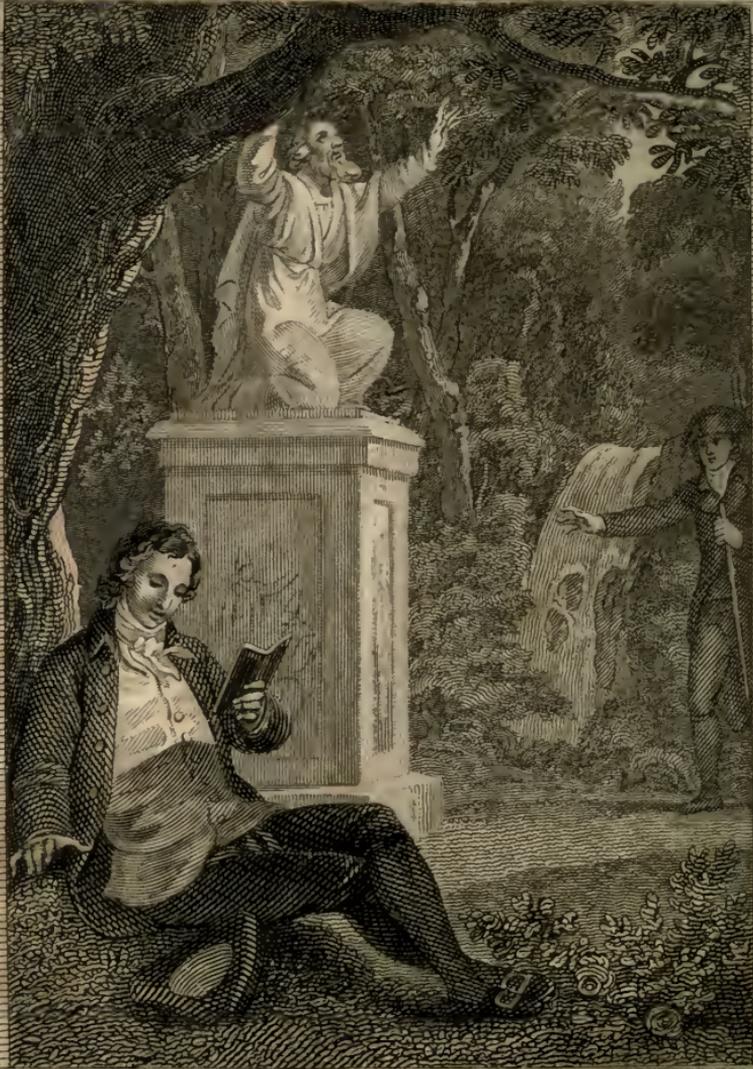
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Edward J. Chapin





Theron & Aspasio.
Dialogue the Twelfth.

Craig, del.

E. Smith sculp.

Theron and Aspasio:

OR,

E. J. Chapman

A SERIES

OF

DIALOGUES AND LETTERS

UPON THE MOST

IMPORTANT AND INTERESTING SUBJECTS.



IN TWO VOLUMES.

BY THE

REV. JAMES HERVEY, A. M.

Late Rector of Weston-Favell, in Northamptonshire.

VOL. II.



CAXTON PRESS:

PRINTED BY NUTTALL, FISHER, AND CO. LIVERPOOL.

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THELON & ASPASIO.
Dialogue the Thirteenth.

W. M. Craig del.

E. Goddall sculp.

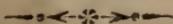
Theron and Aspasio :

OR,

A SERIES

OF

DIALOGUES.



DIALOGUE XII.

THE morning had been wet ; at noon the rain ceased, but the heavens still continued gloomy. Towards evening a gentle eastern gale sprung up, which dissipated the dead calm, and cleared the face of the sky. The sun, which had been muffled in clouds, dropped the veil ; disengaged from the dusky shroud, he shone forth with peculiar splendour. His beams, endeared by the late suspension, were doubly welcome, and produced unusual gaiety.

At this juncture, Theron and Aspasio walked abroad. They walked alternately on the terraces, one of which was opposite to the country, the other contiguous to the parterre ; where the gales, impregnated with the freshest exhalations of nature, breathed the smell of meads, and heaths, and groves ; or else shaking the clusters of roses, and sweeping the beds of fragrance, they flung balm and odours through the air.

At a distance were heard the bleatings of the flock, mingled with the lowings of the milky mothers. While more melodious music warbled from the neighbouring boughs, and spoke aloud the joy of their feathered inhabitants ;—and not only spoke their joy, but spread an additional charm over all the landscape.

A delightful landscape

For, amidst such strains of native harmony, the breathing perfumes smell more sweet, the streaming rills shine more clear, and the universal prospect looks more gay.

Then was experienced what Milton so delicately describes :

If chance the radiant sun with farewell sweet
Extend his ev'ning beam, the fields revive,
The birds their notes renew, and bleating herds
Attest their joy, that hill and valley rings.

With wonder and delight our friends observe both the exquisite beauty, and the immense magnificence of things. They were struck with the most profound veneration of that almighty Majesty, who hung the sun in vaults of azure, and clothed his orb with robes of lustre, whose "right hand spanueth the heavens,"* "and stretcheth them out as a tent," for innumerable creatures, worlds, systems, "to dwell in."†—Charmed they were at the consideration of the Creator's boundless beneficence; who lifts up the light of his countenance, and joy is shed; who opens his munificent hand, and plenty is poured throughout all the regions of the universe; insomuch that even inanimate beings seem to smile under a sense of the blessings; and though they find not a tongue to praise, yet speak their acclamation by their gladdened looks.

Ther. How very different, Aspasio, is this delightful appearance of things from your ill-favoured doctrine of original guilt, and original depravity! Your doctrine is a contradiction to the language of nature. Nature says, through all her works, "That God is good, and men are made to be happy;" whereas your opinion would turn the whole world into a vast hospital, and make every individual person a Leper or a Lazarus.

Asp. I join with my Theron, and with universal nature, in bearing witness to the goodness of our God;

* Isa. xlviii. 13.

† Isa. xl. 22.

The controversy resumed.

and nothing, I am persuaded, displays it more, nothing manifests it so much, as the doctrine of our *fall* in Adam, connected with our *recovery* in Christ.—Only in one particular I am obliged to dissent: it is not my opinion that would make, but the sin of our forefather which has made, the whole world an infirmity, and every individual person a leper.

Ther. At this rate, you would crowd into that single act of disobedience, evils more numerous, and more fatal, than the plagues which were lodged in Pandora's box, or the troops which were stowed in the Trojan horse.

Asp. Far more numerous, and infinitely more pernicious. The fable of Pandora's box seems to have been a shred of the doctrine picked up by the Heathen wits, and fashioned according to their sportive fancy. This would, if there was any occasion for such weak assistance, bring in the Pagan theology, as a subsidiary evidence to our cause.—The Trojan horse poured ruin upon a single city; but the primitive transgression entailed misery upon all generations.

Ther. You have advanced this heavy charge pretty strenuously, I must confess; but without descending to facts, or appealing to experience. All the invectives are general and declamatory; none pointed and particular.

Asp. It is easy, my dear friend, too easy, to draw up a particular bill of indictment; and not only to specify the fact, but to demonstrate the charge. Experience, sad experience, will furnish us with a cloud of witnesses, and prove my remonstrances to be more than invectives.

Were we to dissect human nature, as in our last conference you treated the animal system, we should find the leprosy of corruption spreading itself through our whole frame; for which reason it is styled, by an inspired writer, "the old man,"*—Old, because, in its commencement, it was early as the fall; and in its

* Rom. vi. 6.

Scripture attestations to the total depravity of human nature.

communication to individuals, is coeval with their being. Man, because it has tainted the body, infected the soul, and disordered the whole person.

St. Paul, describing a profligate conversation, speaks in this remarkable manner; “fulfilling the desires of the flesh, and of the mind.”* By the desires of the flesh, he means those irregular inclinations which correspond with the animal part of our constitution. By the desires of the mind, he denotes those evil propensities which are more immediately seated in the intellectual faculties.—And by both he very strongly expresses the total depravation of our nature.

Ther. What you call evil propensities, I am apt to think, are not really sinful, but appointed for the trial of our virtue; nay, since they are confessedly natural, they cannot be in themselves evil; because, upon this supposition, God, who is the author of our nature, would be the author also of our sin.

Asp. Then you imagine that propensities to evil are void of guilt; this is the Popish notion, but neither the Mosaic nor the Apostolic doctrine.—In the law of Moses it is written, “Thou shalt not covet.”† The divine Legislator prohibits not only the iniquitous practice, but the evil desire.—The apostle gives it in charge to the Colossians, “Mortify your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, and” which is the source of all, “evil concupiscence.”‡ Now can that be free from guilt which we are commanded to mortify? which, if not mortified, denominates us children of disobedience, and subjects us to the wrath§ of God?

Though these propensities are confessedly natural, they may be evil notwithstanding. The sacred writers oppose what is natural to what is spiritual. Instead of commending it as innocent, they condemn it as foolish,|| base,¶ and criminal.**—Neither does this

* Eph. ii. 3.

§ Col. iii. 6.

† Exod. xx. 17.

|| 1 Cor. ii. 14.

** Eph. ii. 3.

† Col. iii. 5.

¶ 2 Pet. ii. 12.

The darkness of the human understanding in divine truth.

make the author of our nature the author of our sin; but it proves that our nature has sustained a deplorable loss; that it is quite different from its original state; that what is spoken of the Israelitish people is applicable to the human race: "I planted thee a noble vine, wholly a right seed; how then art thou turned into the degenerate plant of a strange vine?"*

However, let us observe your proposal; dwell no longer on general hints, but descend to a particular examination. As our examination will chiefly respect the soul, let me inquire, what are her principal faculties?

Ther. The understanding, the will, and the affections. These are the most distinguishing powers which that queen of the human economy retains in her service; these, like the several distributions of some ample river, run through the whole man, to quicken, fertilize, and enrich all his conversation. But you represent them bitter as the waters of Marah; unwholesome as the streams of Jericho; noxious as the pottage prepared for the sons of the prophets.

Asp. Nor is this a misrepresentation; for such they really are, till divine grace, like Moses's wood, † like Elisha's salt, ‡ or the meal § cast in by that holy man of God, sweeten them, heal them, and render their operations salutary.

The understanding claims our first regard. This, however qualified to serve the purposes of civil life, is unable to discover the truths in which wisdom consists, or to form the tempers from which happiness flows.

Let us take our specimen, not from the uncultivated savages of Afric, but from the politest nation in Europe. The Grecians piqued themselves on their intellectual accomplishments; they termed all the rest of mankind barbarians: yet even these sons of science, "professing themselves wise, were," in fact, egregious

* Jer. ii. 21.

† Exod. xv. 25.

‡ 2 Kings ii. 21, 22.

§ 2 Kings iv. 41.

The wisest heathens ignorant of the first principle in true religion :

“fools.”*—Not to enumerate the shocking immoralities which poets ascribe to their deities; not to insist upon the gross idolatries which the common people practised in their worship, even their philosophers, the most improved and penetrating geniuses, were unacquainted with the very first principle† of true religion. Even they could not pronounce, with an unfaltering tongue,‡ “That God is one.”

Ther. With regard to the philosophers, the prejudices of a wrong education might pervert their judgment; or, in compliance with the prevailing mode, they

* Rom. i. 22.

† The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel, The Lord our God is one Lord; and thou shalt love the Lord, &c. Mark 12. 29. From which it appears, that the unity of the Godhead is the foundation of all the divine commandments, and of all human worship.

‡ Unfaltering—for though in Plato’s book of laws, we meet with ο θεος—τοι θεοι—τοι θεοι again and again; yet he soon departs from this sound speech, and relapses into the language of idolatry.

A learned and ingenious friend would fain have Socrates exempted from this charge. I wish I could gratify his benevolent temper, and spare that amiable philosopher. But, however justly he may express himself on some occasions, at other times he wavers; he evidently revolts; and is most pitifully inconsistent with himself. Even in his excellent conference with Aristodemus, where he argues admirably well for the existence, he cannot steadily adhere to the unity, of the Godhead: nay, in his last solemn apology before his judges, he publicly renounces the truth; declares that he worshipped those gods which were acknowledged by his countrymen; worshipped them, and no other; on the same festivals, at the same altars, and in the same (idolatrous) manner; no other: these are his words, Ουτε γαρ εβουλεν αντι Διου, και Ηρας, και των συν θεοις θεων, ετι θυων τις καινοις Δαιμοσιν, ετι οημαζων αλλω θεω αναπιφθηα. *Socrat. Memorab. lib. i. c. i. sect. 11. 24.*

Let none conclude, from this or any other passage, that we would consign over all the Heathens to damnation. This is as far from our intention as it is foreign to the argument. We are only, like witnesses, summoned to give in our evidence: from which it appears, that the very best among the Gentiles were ignorant of the true God; or, if “they knew him” in any degree, “they glorified him not as God, but became vain in their imagination,” and vile in their worship—Whether they shall obtain mercy, or which of them shall be objects of divine clemency, is left solely to the determination of their supreme, unerring, righteous Judge.

—“Non nostrum est tantas componere lites.”

Equally at a loss as to the supreme Good.

might adopt customs, and assent to notions, which they did not thoroughly approve.

Asp. A poor compliment this to their integrity!— Had I been their advocate, methinks I would have given up the sagacity of my clients, rather than their fidelity to the cause of God and truth.

With reference to the supreme Good, they were equally at a loss. There is not one among all the inferior creatures, not even the crawling worm, or the buzzing fly, but perceives what is beneficial, and pursues it; discerns what is pernicious, and avoids it. Yonder caterpillar, whose nourishment is from one particular species of vegetables, never makes a wrong application to another; never is allured by the fragrance of the auricula, or dazzled by the splendour of the true character of mankind in general, And does the tulip; but constantly distinguishes, and as constantly adheres to, the leaf which affords her the proper food. So sagacious are the meanest animals, with relation to their respective happiness! while the most celebrated of the Heathen sages were, on a subject of the very same import, mere dotards. Varro reckons up no less than two hundred and eighty-eight different opinions concerning the true good; and not one of them derives it from the true source; I mean, a conformity to the ever-blessed God, and an enjoyment of his infinite perfections.

If, on these leading points, they were so erroneous, no wonder that they were bewildered in their other researches.

Ther. We are not inquiring into the circumstances of this or that particular nation, but into the state of mankind in general.

Asp. Cast your eye, Theron, upon those swallows; they shoot themselves, with surprising rapidity, through the air. I should take them for so many living arrows, were it not for their shifting, winding, wanton motions. Are not these what you call birds of passage?

Ther. These, and some other of the feathered race, are our constant visitors in summer, but leave us at

The wonderful instinct of birds of passage, reproaches man's want of heavenly wisdom.

the approach of winter. As soon as the weather becomes cold, they assemble themselves in a body, and concert measures for their departure. Who convenes the assembly, what debates arise, or how they communicate the resolution taken, I do not presume to say: this is certain, that not one of them dislodges till the affair is settled, and the proclamation has been published. Not a single loiterer is to be seen when the troops are preparing for their decampment; nor a single straggler to be found, when they have once begun their march.—Having finished their journey through the land, their wings become a sort of sails,* and they launch, not into; but over the ocean. Without any compass to regulate their course, or any chart to make observations in their voyage, they arrive safely at the desired shore. And what is still more extraordinary, they always find the readiest way, and the shortest cut.

Asp. “The stork in the heavens knoweth her appointed times; and the turtle, and the crane, and the swallow, observe the time of their coming: but my people know not the judgment of their God.”† The young ones of those birds perceive how absolutely necessary it is to forsake the land of their nativity, and travel in quest of milder climes. But our offspring, even when their minds begin to open, “are brutish in their knowledge.”‡ Born they are, and too long continue, “like the wild ass's colt,”§ not only quite destitute of heavenly wisdom, but stupid to apprehend it, and averse to receive it. As soon as they are born, they go astray, and—

* “Remigio alarum.” *Virg.*

† Jer. viii. 7.

‡ Jer. x. 14.

§ Job xi. 12. How keenly is this comparison pointed! Like the ass, an animal remarkable for its stupidity, even to a proverb. Like the ass's colt, which must be still more egregiously stupid than the dam. Like the wild ass's colt, which is not only blockish, but stubborn and refractory, neither possesses valuable qualities by nature, nor will easily receive them by discipline. The image in the original is yet more strongly touched. The comparative particle *like* is not in the Hebrew; “born a wild ass's colt;” or, as we should say in English, “a mere wild, &c.”

The difficulty of a religious education proves the human mind averse from good.

Ther. "Go astray"—To what is this owing, but to the bad examples they behold? They catch the wayward habit from the irregular conversation of others.

Asp. Is not this a confirmation of my point? Why are they yielding clay to each bad impression? case-hardened steel to every edifying application?—From imitating unworthy examples, you can hardly withhold them by the tightest rein. But if you would affect them with a sense of divine things, or bring them acquainted with God their Maker, "line must be upon line; line upon line; precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept; here a little and there a little."* What farther corroborates my sentiment, is, that all these tender toils of erudition are generally unwelcome, are too often unsuccessful, nay, will always be ineffectual, without the concurrence of almighty grace.

Besides, Theron, if this propensity to evil be observable in all children, it seems more than probable that the unhappy bias is derived from their parents, rather than caught from their neighbours; and owing, not to the influence of external examples, but to a principle of internal corruption.†—Neglect the education of children, and you are sure to have their manners evil, their lives unprofitable. Nay, only remit your endeavours, and they lose what has been gained; they

* A great critic has laid down the following rule, to be observed in fine writing:

'Tis not enough no harshness gives offence,
The sound must be an echo to the sense.

Pope's Essay on Criticism.

Never was this delicate maxim more nicely exemplified, than in the above-cited passage of Isaiah, chap. xxviii. 13.—Another instance of the same kind occurs in the seventh verse, where the language seems to mimic the reeling, struggling, giddy motions of a drunkard, while it iterates and reiterates the idea; expresses the same thing in a different, and still different manner, with an apparent, and, in this case, a significant circumrotation of words.

† St. Paul confesses, that he and his fellow-saints were, in their unconverted state, depraved: and this, not *δια την εξη*, by custom, or habit, but *φύσει*, by nature. Eph. ii. 3.

Sin, like weeds in a garden, springs up spontaneously in the human mind.

start aside like a broken bow. And wherefore this? Why do they not, without the rules of discipline, or lessons of instruction, spontaneously addict themselves to the exercise of every virtue? just as the cygnets in yonder canal spontaneously take to the element of water, and the act of swimming.

That bed in the garden before us, will suggest the reason. It has been digged and dressed this very day; it now lies smooth and clean. Not a single weed appears on this surface; yet how certainly will it, in a very little time, produce a plenteous growth of those vegetable nuisances?—Whence can this proceed? No hand will sow them; no wish will invite them. But the seeds, though unperceived by any eye, are already there. Disseminated by the winds, they have mixed themselves with the mould, and are sunk into the soil. So, just so it is with our children. The seeds of iniquity are within them;* and unless proper diligence be exerted by us, unless gracious assistance be vouchsafed from above, they will assuredly spring up, over-run their souls, and dishonour their lives.

Ther. Let us leave the children, and make men the subject of our inquiry.

Asp. In this respect, Theron,

“Men are but children of a larger growth.”

We may leave the vest or hanging-sleeve coat, but we shall still find the follies of the child.—In youth, what low ambition and fondness for despicable pleasures. In manhood, what a keen pursuit of transitory wealth, yet what a cold inattention to God and holiness?—

* Whoever chuses to examine the seeds, the poisonous seeds, which are lodged in this nursery of all evil, may see a sample of them in our Lord's description, Mark vii. 20, 21, 22, 23; where he characterizes the heart, not barely of the hypocritical pharisee, or the abandoned publican, but of mankind in general. After such an authority, shall I mentioned the testimony of Seneca? We are allowed to glean the grapes, when the vintage is gathered. In such a view I would introduce the philosopher after the Saviour. *Omnia in omnibus vitia sunt; sed non omnia in singulis extant.*—*De Benef.* lib. IV.

Illustration of a beautiful passage in Milton.

Men, and men too of the greatest abilities, whose penetration on other subjects is piercing as the eagle's sight, are, on the most important points, blind as the incaverned mole.

Ther. What! is the understanding like the most dim-sighted animal, when lodged in her darkest retirement? that sublime faculty of the soul; which lends her eye to all the rest, sits at the helm, and directs their motions!

Asp. You remember, I presume, that beautiful passage in Milton;* which Mr. Addison so highly admires, and so judicially illustrates. The passage, I mean, where the archangel Michael comes down, to advertise Adam of future events, and to execute the sentence of divine justice.

Ther. I remember it perfectly well.—In the east, the great light of day lies under an eclipse. In the west, a bright cloud descends; filled with an host of angels, and more luminous than the sun itself. The whole theatre of nature is darkened, that this glorious machine may appear in all its magnificence and beauty.—From this radiant chariot the potentate of heaven alights, and advances with a majestic stateliness to meet Adam.

Asp. Should you see such an august personage, alighting from such a splendid chariot, and walking amidst the thronged streets of a city?—should you behold every one intent upon his business or diversions, struck with no awe, paying no reverential regard to this celestial visitant; what would you think?

Ther. I should certainly suspect, that some superior power had drawn a veil over their sight, and hid this wonderful spectacle from their view.

Asp. Such is really the case with all mankind by nature, and, with the generality of people, during their whole life.—God, the infinitely-great God, is in every place. Yet how few advert to his presence?—All na-

All nature proclaims the Creator's praise, yet man regards not.

ture exhibits him to their senses; yet perhaps he is not in any of their thoughts.

The sun, clothed in transcendent brightness, most illustriously displays his Maker's glory. The moon, though dressed in fainter beams, has lustre enough to shew us the adorable Deity, and his marvellous perfections. The stars, fixed as they are at an unmeasurable distance, and lessened almost to a point, come in with their evidence, and magnify their Creator to a gazing, but unaffected, world.

The air whispers his clemency in the gentle, the refreshing gales of spring. If we take no notice of this soft persuasive address, the tone is elevated; the majesty of Jehovah sounds aloud, in roaring winds, and rending storms. Yet both expedients fail. Man is like the deaf adder, that stoppeth her ears. He refuseth to hear the voice of the charmers, charm they never so sweetly, never so forcibly.

Each flower, arrayed in beauty, and breathing perfume, courts our affections for its infinitely amiable Author.—Not a bird that warbles, nor a brook that murmurs, but invites our praise, or chides our ingratitude.—All the classes of fruits deposit their attestation on our palates, yet seldom reach our hearts. They give us a proof of the divine benignity, a proof as undeniable as it is pleasing, and too often as ineffectual also.

In short, the whole creation is a kind of magnificent embassy from its almighty Lord; deputed to proclaim his excellences, and demand our homage. Yet who has not disregarded the former, and withheld the latter?—How few walk, as seeing Him that is invisible, or have fellowship with the Father of spirits? though to walk before him, is our highest dignity; and to have fellowship with him, is our only felicity?

Ther. This is owing to inattention, rather than to any blindness or defect in man's understanding. The many works of genius, which have been produced in

The difficulty of self-government proves the fallen state of man.

various ages, are an abundant proof of his intellectual capacity.—Have not the seas been traversed, and the skies measured? Has not the earth been disembowelled of its choicest treasures; while its surface it beautified with towns, cities, palaces innumerable? —What fine arts are invented and exercised; and to what a pitch of perfection are they carried? Arts that seem, if not to exceed, at least to rival nature. It was the understanding, which formed all these great designs. It was the understanding, which contrived the means, and conducted the execution.—And are not those unquestionable evidences of her very superior abilities?

Asp. Then she is like some great empress, who conquers half the world, but is unable to rule herself; who extends her regulations into foreign climes, while her domestic affairs are involved in confusion.—Do you doubt the reality of this remark? Set yourself to meditate upon the most interesting truths. How desultory, how incoherent are your thoughts.—Charge them to be collected. They disobey your orders.—Rally the undisciplined vagrants. Again they desert the task. Exert all your power, and keep them close to their business. Still they elude your endeavours.

The other day, I could not forbear smiling at little adventure of your youngest son's. Some quicksilver, which happened to be spilt upon the floor, parted into several globules. The shining balls looked so prettily, he longed to make them his own. But when he offered to take them up, they slipt from his hand. As soon as he renewed the attempt, so often he met with a disappointment. The closer he strove to grasp them, the more speedily they escaped from his fingers. He seemed at first to be amazed, then became quite angry, that the little fugitives should so constantly baffle his repeated efforts.—Thus unmanageable I very often find my own thoughts. If yours are under no better regimen, this

The wandering of the thoughts in the most solemn duties proves our natural debility.

may convince us both, that all is not according to the original creation.

We apply ourselves to converse with the everlasting God in prayer. Here one would expect to have the thoughts all clearness, and all composure. But here "we are not sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves."* All those holy ideas, which create reverence, or strengthen faith, or quicken love, come from the Father of lights. Should he withdraw his influence, all will be dull, and dark, and dead. It may be we are somewhat enlivened in the sacred exercise; before we are aware, perhaps in the very midst of the solemn office, our attention is dissipated; and not dissipated only, but scattered to the ends of the earth. The God of all glory is forsaken, and the devotion paid to some senseless foppery. A malefactor, begging his life at the knees of his sovereign; and discontinuing his suit, in order to caress a lap-dog, or pursue a butterfly; is but a faint image of the vanity which attends our devotional services.—Reason, which ought to correct these irregularities, is treated like the incredulous lord; who, instead of controlling the unruly multitude, was overborne by their impetuosity, and trodden under foot.†

Since then the reins are struck out of our hands, and we have lost the rule over our own faculties; surely we are in a state different, very different from our primitive constitution.

Ther. However insensible to refined speculation, the understanding, when interest is in the case, is apprehensive enough.

Asp. In temporal,‡ not in spiritual affairs.—Your younger brother, Theron, is a merchant. We will suppose him at the sea-side; within a small distance of the vessel, in which a considerable part of his sub-

* 2 Cor. iii. 5.

† 2 Kings vii. 17.

‡ Called therefore by the apostle, "fleshy wisdom," and opposed to the grace of God, 2 Cor. i. 12.

The unconcern of men to their eternal welfare, an effect of original corruption.

stance is embarked.—We will suppose the vessel in the utmost distress, ready to founder with her leaks, or to strike upon the rocks.—If he discovers no sign of concern, calls in no assistance from the country, makes no effort to save the crew, and secure the cargo; would you not think him bereaved of his understanding, or deprived of his sight?—Could you conceive a more favourable opinion of his eyes or his intellect, if, instead of trying every method to prevent a shipwreck, he should amuse himself with picking shells from the ocean, or drawing figures on the sand?

We, and every one of our fellow-creatures, have an interest in jeopardy, unspeakably more precious than all the rich lading of a thousand fleets. Our souls, our immortal souls, are exposed every day, every hour, to the peril of everlasting destruction. Every temptation is threatening to their endless welfare, as a ridge of craggy rocks to a ship that drives before the strongest gale.—Yet how unconcerned are mankind? Where is their holy fear? where their godly jealousy? where their wakeful circumspection? Rather, what a gay insensibility is observable in their behaviour? Or else, what a lifeless formality prevails in their supplications? their supplications to that almighty Being, who alone is able to save and to destroy?—Was not the human understanding both darkened and benumbed, we should see our neighbours, we should feel ourselves, awakened into much the same earnest solicitude as the disciples expressed, when, perceiving the waves boisterous, and their bark sinking, they cried, “ Lord, save us! we perish !”

But alas! in things of an unseen nature, though of eternal consequence, interest, that habitual darling of every heart, loses its engaging influence. Nay, when eternity, all-important eternity is at stake, even self-preservation is scarce any longer a governing principle.—What can be more deplorable? and, if we admit not the doctrine of original corruption, what so unaccountable?

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 Wealth more unfavourable to heavenly-mindedness than poverty.  
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Ther. This, I must confess, is true with regard to the unthinking rabble. To them may be accommodated the remark of Augustus; who, when he saw some foreign females carrying apes in their arms instead of infants, said to one of his courtiers, "Have the women of those countries no children, that they are so fond of such despicable animals?"—The vulgar are so immersed in secular cares, that one might indeed be tempted to ask, "Have those people no souls, that buying and selling, eating and drinking, ingross their whole concern?"—But persons of rank and education think in a more exalted manner.

Asp. Do you then imagine, that an elevation of circumstances sets the affections on things above; or that it is the peculiar infelicity of the vulgar, to grovel in their desires?—Gold, I believe, is more likely to increase, than to dissipate the fog on the mind. Abundance of possessions, instead of disengaging the heart, fasten it more inseparably to the earth. Even superior attainments in learning, if not sanctified by grace, serve only to render the owner somewhat more refined in his follies.—But comparisons between the various classes of mankind, are as useless as they are invidious. None, in either condition, attend to the things which make for their peace, till they are awakened from their lethargy by the quickening Spirit of Christ. And even then we cannot but observe evident indications of much remaining blindness.

How apt are such persons to mistake the way of salvation; to place their own works for a foundation of hope, instead of Christ the rock of ages? thinking by their own performances to win, not seeking from unmerited grace to receive, the inheritance of eternal glory. Which is more absurdly vain, than to offer toys as an equivalent for thrones, or to dream of purchasing diadems with a mite.—They are also prone to misapprehend the nature of holiness; are zealous to regulate the external conduct, without attending to the renovation of the heart; in outward forms elabo-

The natural man unable to comprehend the things of God.

rate; with respect to inward sanctity, less if at all exact. A labour just as preposterous, as to skin over the face of a wound, while it festers at the bottom, and consumes the bone.

Give me leave to ask, Theron. When our Lord declares, “ unless a man be born again, he cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven;”* when he speaks of “ eating his flesh, and drinking his blood;”† when you hear or read of union with the blessed Jesus, or communion with the most high God; is there not a cloud, if not total darkness, on your mind?‡—How erroneous was the psalmist himself, in his judgment concerning the divine disposals? “ So foolish was I, and ignorant, even as it were a beast,” or as the veriest beast, “ before thee.”§—The voice of experience, therefore, will attest what the word of revelation has averred, That the natural man, be his intellectual abilities ever so pregnant, or ever so improved, “ cannot know the things of the Spirit of God:”|| he has no sight to discern their beauty, no taste to relish their sweetness. Nay, though they are the purest light, and the most perfect wisdom, to him they appear not only dark and obscure, but even foolishness itself.

Would this be the case, if the understanding was

* John iii. 3.

† John vi. 54.

‡ With regard to the mysteries of Christ, the greatest proficient are but obtuse acute, dull even in their acuteness. What says the wise Agur? an invaluable fragment of whose works is preserved in the book of Proverbs. “ Surely I am more brutish than any man, and have not the understanding of a man:” even though the following verses bespeak the very singular elevation and extent of his knowledge. Prov. xxx. 2.—Conformably to the experience of this excellent man, I have always observed, that the more enlightened people are, the more they lament their ignorance; the more they pant after a continual progress in heavenly knowledge; and pray for clearer, still clearer manifestations of the incomprehensible God.

§ I question whether Aspasio’s translation comes fully up to the emphasis of the original. The comparative particle is omitted in the Hebrew. It softens and palliates the matter. Therefore the psalmist, to express the deepest sense of his ignorance, says, “ I was a beast,” yea, “ the veriest beast,” גַּחְמֹת Ps. lxxiii. 22.

|| 1 Cor. ii. 4.

The perverseness of unregenerate men in disobeying the divine will.

not greatly depraved? Should it be difficult for your ear to distinguish the diversity of sounds, or for your eye to discern the variety of colours, would not you conclude that the organs were very much impaired?

Ther. I think, you have treated the understanding as Zopyrus served his own body,* when he went over to the enemy.—Do you intend to mangle the other faculties at the same unmerciful rate?

Asp. That nobleman made the wounds, which disfigured his flesh. I have only probed the sores, which were found in the understanding. If I have touched the quick, and put the patient to pain, it is only to facilitate the operation of medicine, and make way for a cure.—But permit me to ask, wherein does the excellency of the human will consist?

Ther. In following the guidance of reason, and submitting to the influence of proper authority.

Asp. The will, I fear, rejects the government of reason; and it is undeniably certain, that it rebels against the authority of God.

Cast your eye upon that team of horses, with which yonder countryman is ploughing his fallow-ground. No less than five of those robust animals are linked together, and yield their submissive necks to the draught. They have more strength than twenty men, yet are managed by a single lad. They not only stand in awe of the lash, but listen to the voice of their driver. They turn to the right hand or to the left; they quicken their pace, or stop short in the furrows, at the bare intimation of his pleasure.—Are we equally obedient to the calls, to the exhortations, the express injunctions, of our heavenly Lord? The blessed Jesus spoke at the beginning, and the world was made. He speaks by his providence, and the universe is upheld. When he shall speak at the last day, the heavens will pass away, and the earth be dissolved. Yet he speaks to us in his divine word, and we turn a deaf ear to his

† See Rollin's Ancient Hist. vol. III. p. 46.

The industry and foresight of the ant.

address. He speaks in tender expostulations, and no melting of heart ensues. He speaks in precious promises, and no ardent desires are enkindled.—The will, which in these cases ought to be turned as wax to the seal, is unimpressed and inflexible as an iron sinew.

Ther. The human will is constantly inclined to preserve, accommodate, and make its possessor happy. Is not this the right position, in which it should always stand; or the most desirable direction, that can be given to its motions?

Asp. I should be glad, if fact bore witness to your assertion. But fact, I apprehend, is on the contrary side. I took notice, as we came along, of some ants busily employed on a little hillock. Have you made any observations, Theron, on this reptile community.

Ther. It is a little republic.* They inhabit a kind of oblong city, divided into various streets. They are governed by laws, and regulated by politics, of their own. Their magazines are commodiously formed, and judiciously guarded against the injuries of the weather. Some are defended by an arch made of earth, and cemented with a peculiar sort of glue. Some are covered with rafters of slender wood, and thatched with rushes or grass. The roof is always raised with a double slope, to turn away the current of the waters; and shoot the rain from their storehouses. They all bestir themselves, with incessant assiduity, while the air is serene; while the roads are good; and abundance of loose grain lies scattered over the fields.—By these precautions, they live secure when storms embroil the sky; they want no manner of conveniency, even when winter lays waste the plains.

Asp. Do we improve, so diligently, our present opportunities? This life is the seed-time of eternity. Do we husband the precious moments like persons sensible of their unspeakable importance? sensible,

* See Nat. Displ. vol. I.

The surprising indifference of man as to his future happiness.

that if we trifle and are indolent, they will be irrecoverably gone, and we irretrievably ruined?

Sickness, we know not how soon, may invade us, pain may torment us, and both may issue in our final dissolution. Are we duly aware of these awful changes, and properly solicitous to put all in order for their approach?—We walk (alarming thought!) upon the very brink of death, resurrection, and judgment. Do we walk like wise virgins, with our loins girt; with our lamps trimmed; in a state of continual readiness for the heavenly Bridegroom's advent?

Those ants "have no guide, overseer, or ruler. Yet they prepare their meat in the summer, and gather their seed in the harvest."* We have all these, yet neglect the time of our visitation.—We have God's unerring word, to guide us; God's ever-watchful eye, to oversee us; God's sovereign command, to rule and quicken us. Notwithstanding all these motives, is not the speech of the sluggard, the very language of our conduct? "A little more sleep, a little more slumber, a little more folding of the hands to sleep."† The most supine indifference, where all possible diligence is but just sufficient! This, you must allow, is the true character of mankind in general. And does this demonstrate the rectitude of their will?

Ther. The understanding may be said to carry the torch, the will to hold the balance. Now the perfection of a balance consists in being so nicely poised, as

* Prov. vi. 7.

† There is, if I mistake not, a nice gradation in this speech of the sluggard; such as very naturally mimics the manner of that lazy creature. He pleads, first, for some considerable degree of indulgence, "A little sleep."—If that is too much to be granted, he craves some smaller toleration of his sloth, "A little slumber."—If the taskmaster still rings in his ear, still goads his side, one almost sees him, rubbing his heavy eyes, and yawning out his last request; "A little folding of the hands" at least "to lie down." תבן ידיים לשבב Prov. vi. 10. When such is our conduct with regard to eternal interest, how justly may we apply that spirited expostulation of the poet;

"Tantamne rem tam negligenter!"

The depravity of man's will conspicuous in his choice of what is evil.

to incline at the least touch, and preponderate with the slightest weight. This property belongs, without all dispute, to the human will.

Asp. What, if one of your scales should descend to the ground, though charged with trifles that are light as air; if the other should kick the beam, though its contents be weightier than talents of gold?—Is not this an exact representation of our will, when the fleeting pleasures of sense, or the puny interests of time, excite our wishes; even while the solid delights of religion, and the immensely-rich treasures of immortality, can hardly obtain our attention?—However, let us quit the metaphor, and examine fact. Suppose I make it appear, that, instead of chusing the most eligible objects, the will is so deplorably vitiated, as to loath what is salutary, and to be fond of what is baneful.

Ther. If you prove this to be universally the case, you will prove your favourite point with a witness.

Asp. When providence is pleased to thwart our measures, or defeat our endeavours; to bring us under the cloud of disgrace, or lay upon us the rod of affliction; what is our behaviour? Do we bow our heads in humble resignation? Do we open our mouths in thankful acknowledgments?—Observe the waters in that elegant octangular bason. They assimilate themselves, with the utmost readiness, and with equal exactness, to the vessel that contains them. So would the human will, if it were not extremely froward and foolish, conform itself to the divine; which is unerringly wise, and of all possible contingencies, incomparably the best.*—Yet how apt are we to fret with disquiet-

* This seems to be the meaning of the prophet; ארת לצדק מישרים Isa. xxvi. 7. Not—The way of the just is uprightnes—This sense, in the present connexion, is hardly consistent with humility; is by no means proper, to introduce a devotional address to the great Jehovah: Rather—God's way to the just is uprightnes; or, still more emphatically, uprightneses; is in all respects irreprovable, excellent, admirable; suited, perfectly suited, to every sacred attribute of wisdom, goodness, and truth.

Man, in his unregenerate state, utterly averse from all godliness.

tude ; and struggle under afflictive dispensations, “ as a wild bull in a net !”

Ther. This is a very imperfect proof, Aspasio, and corresponds only with part of your accusation. We may dislike what is wholesome, especially if it be unpalatable, yet not be fond of our bane.

Asp. Should you see a person, who thirsts after the putrid lake, but disrelishes the running fountain ; who longs for the empoisoned berries of the night-shade, but abhors the delicious fruit of the orchard ; would you applaud the regularity of his appetite ?—I don’t wait for your answer. But I more than suspect, this is a true picture of all unregenerate people. How do they affect dress and external ornament ; but are unwilling, rather than desirous, to be “ clothed with humility,”* and “ to put on Christ !”† Amusement will engage, play animate, and diversion fire them ; but as to the worship of the living God, O ! “ what a weariness is it !”‡ This is attended, if attended at all, with languor, and a listless insensibility. Frothy novels, and flatulent wit, regale their taste : while the marrow and fatness of the divine word are as “ their sorrowful meat.”§ What is all this, but to loath the salutary, and long for the baneful ?||

* 1 Pet. v. 5.

† Rom. xiii. 14.

‡ Mal. i. 13.

§ Job vi. 7.

|| The reader may see this unhappy contrast drawn in the strongest colours, by the royal preacher, and by the mourning prophet.—Because I have called, and ye refused ; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded ; but ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof. What a crowd of words, emphatically declaring the most incorrigible perverseness ; which is a proof against every method of reformation, against all the arts even of divine persuasion. Prov. i. 24, 25.—The host of heaven, whom they have loved, and whom they have served, and after whom they have walked, and whom they have sought, and whom they have worshipped. What a heap of expressions ! significantly describing that impetuous ardour, which no prohibitions can restrain ; and that insatiable avidity, which never knows when to say, “ It is enough.” Jer. viii. 2.

If I beg leave to add another example of this kind, it is chiefly for the sake of clearing up an obscure passage in the Psalms ; which seems to have been mistaken by the authors of both our versions.—

Without divine grace, prosperity and adversity equally increase our natural depravity.

Let me, from the same comparison, propose one question more, which may be applicable both to the will and to the understanding.—Should you hear of another person, the state of whose stomach was so disposed, that it turned the most nourishing food into phlegm, and derived matter of disease from the most sovereign supports of health; what would you think of his constitution?

Ther. I should certainly think it very much distempered.

Asp. Without the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, our souls turn every occurrence into an increase of their natural depravity. Our very table is a snare; and, instead of exciting us to gratitude, is a provocative to gluttony.—How difficult is it, when we flow in plenty, not to be elated; when we are pressed with poverty, not to repine!—Have we business in the world? It cumbers our thoughts, or tempts us to avarice. Have we no business to manage? We sink into sloth, and settle on the lees of voluptuousness.—If our schemes are prosperous, it is odds but they attach us to the interests of time. If they prove unsuccessful, we are too often chagrined with the disappointment, and sin against meekness.—Even the holy commandment, instead of restraining sin, or producing obedience, irritates the inbred depravity; and renders it more restless, more impetuous, more ungovernable.*—Those very things, which should have been for our welfare (so malignant and raging is our corruption!) are converted into an occasion of falling.

David, to set forth the barbarous assiduity of his persecutors, says, They wander up and down. They pry into every corner; they search the city, and examine the country; לאכל not for meat; which, in this connexion, is a sense quite foreign to the subject, and very jejune indeed; but to devour me, the destined victim of their rage. And if they are not satisfied, if they cannot compass their design by day, וילינו they will grudge? No; but they will continue all night in the prosecution of their purpose. Neither cold nor darkness can retard them; neither hardships nor dangers can divert them; but their attempts are as indefatigable, as their malice is implacable. Ps. lix. 15.

* Rom. vii. 8.

The freedom of man's will confined to worldly transactions;

Ther. The will is under no necessity of misemploying her powers. She is free to act in this manner, or in that; and, if a spendthrift, is not a slave.

Asp. In actions which relate to the animal economy, the will is unquestionably free. She can contract the forehead into a frown, or expand it with a smile.—In the ordinary affairs of life, she is under no control. We can undertake or decline a journey, carry on or discontinue an employ, just as we please.—In the outward acts of religion also, the will is her own mistress. We can read the word of God, or go to the place of divine worship, without any extraordinary aid from above.—But in matters which are more intimately connected with our salvation, the case is different. Here, as our liturgy expresses it, “we are tied and bound with the chain of our sins.”

Would you have a person delight himself in the Lord; take pleasure in devotion; set his affections on things above? All this is both duty and happiness. But, alas! he is alienated from the life of God. His inclinations gravitate quite the contrary way. His will is in the condition of that distressed woman, who was “bowed down with a spirit of infirmity, and could in no wise lift up herself.”* Corruption, like a strong bias influences, or rather like a heavy mountain oppresses, his mind. Neither can he shake off the propensity, or struggle away from the load, until grace, almighty grace, interposes for his release.—Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there, and there alone, is liberty: † that sacred and glorious liberty, which is not the common privilege of all men, but the high prerogative of the children of God.

Would you have a person apply to the great Redeemer; apply with a real ardour of desire; as Bartimeus of old, or the Syrophenician mother!—His will is like the withered arm; cannot stretch forth itself to the all-gracious Saviour; cannot hunger and thirst after his everlasting righteousness and infinite merit;

* Luke xii. 11.

† 2 Cor. iii. 17.

but can accomplish nothing heavenly without divine aid.

till the Saviour himself speaks power into the enfeebled, the perverted faculty.—If you think otherwise, try the experiment. Persuade men to the necessary practice. Urge the most weighty arguments; devise the most pathetic expostulations; let zeal summon all her force, and rhetoric employ all her art. Without being a prophet, I dare venture to foretell the issue. Disappointments, repeated disappointments, will convince you, that our divine Master knew what he said, when he solemnly declared, “No man can come to me, except the Father, which hath sent me, draw him.”*—Our church, in conformity to this and other scriptures, has taught us to pray, “Turn thou us, O good Lord;” for nothing but thy omnipotent agency is capable of doing it; “and so we shall be turned.”

Ther. Are we slaves then? Will christianity send us to seek our brethren, in the mines or in the galleys?

Asp. Christianity does not send, but find us there. There, or in a worse slavery.†—It is doubtless a most abject state, to wear the yoke, and truckle in chains. Yet such, I apprehend, is the state of our minds by nature. To prove this, we need not go down to the lowest ranks of life. “These,” you might say with the prophet, “are poor; these are foolish; they have not known the way of the Lord, nor the judgment of their

* John vi. 44. It is not said the Father drives, but draws: not by violent, irrational, compulsive means! but by clear conviction, sweet persuasion, and inducements suited to a reasonable being. Those are the cords of a beast, these of a man. So that we are not acted upon as clock-work, or influenced as mere machines, but made willing in the day of his power, *Psa. cx. 3.*

† *St. Paul* says of christians, and reckons himself in the number, that they naturally served (not *διακονητες*, but *δουλευοις*, were absolute slaves to) divers lusts and pleasures, *Tit. iii. 3.* The whole verse is remarkable, and nothing can be more apposite to *Aspasio's* purpose. It shews us what they were by nature, who through grace became living images of the blessed God.

This mortifying doctrine is often acknowledged by our church. Thus begins one of her public supplications: Almighty God, who alone canst order unruly wills and affections of sinful man. It seems we cannot determine our own wills, nor regulate our own affections. What is this but bondage?

Persons of superior attainments equally find their passions ungovernable.

God.—I will get me therefore to the great men ;”* and examine their disposition.

Have you not known persons of the greatest intrepidity, and firmest resolution, hurried away by their lusts, as “ a rolling thing before the whirlwind ?” † Perhaps, they were bold enough to face danger, and defy the sword, in the field of battle ; yet were no more able to withstand the wanton allurements of beauty, or the soft solicitations of pleasure, than the moth can forbear fluttering about the flame, even though it singes her wings, and is scorching her to death.—Others, possessed of a refined imagination, disdain the gross indulgences of sensuality ; yet are slaves to their own domineering passions. They are blown into the most intemperate rage, and pushed on to the most extravagant actions, by every little ruffling accident. They see the meanness, which such an ungovernable spirit argues ; they feel the misery, which such internal tempests create ; nay, they resolve to suppress the impetuosity of their temper ; yet are borne away by the torrent ; and, upon the very first provocation, are as furiously resentful as ever.—Will you call these persons free, because their task-masters and their tyrants are lodged within ? ‡ because the fetters are forged, not for the meaner, but for the immortal part of their nature ?

Ther. Let us pass to the affections. These are to the soul, what wings are to the eagle, or sails to the ship. These always stand ready to receive the gales of interest, and to spring at the signal of reason.

Asp. O ! that they did !—But, if the wings are clogged with mire ; if the sails are disproportioned to the ballast ; what advantage will accrue, either to the animal, or to the vessel ? The one will, probably, be

* Jer. v. 4, 5.

† Isa. xvii. 13.

‡ ————— Inordinate desires

And upstart passions catch the government
From reason, and to servitude reduce
Man, till then free.

The first propensities of children tend towards evil.

overset in the voyage; the other will be grovelling on the ground.

Ther. Desire seems to be the first, which “opens the mouth, or moves the wing, or peeps.”* Desire is active as a flame, and ever in pursuit of happiness.

Asp. What if your flame, instead of shooting upwards, should point its inverted spires to the earth? Would not this be strange, and a sign of great disorder?—God is the centre of perfection, and the source of felicity. All that is amiable in itself, is comprehended in God. All that is beneficial to us, proceeds from God. Do our desires uniformly tend to this super-excellent Being? Do our wishes terminate in the enjoyment of his ever-glorious Majesty? Alas! we are naturally estranged from him; we covet no communion with him. We are wedded to trifles, and dote upon vanity: but to God we say,—it is evidently the language of our conduct,—“Depart from us; we desire not the knowledge of thy ways.”†

If desire is the first-born among the affections, observe it in children. There it appears in its dawn, and has most of pure nature.—See, how those flies, exulting in the sunny gleam, vibrate with all the rapidity of motion their little wings.‡ So prompt and expedite are the desires of children to any corrupting diversion.—See how sluggishly that snail, crawling forth amidst the refreshing moisture, drags her slow length along. So dull, if not reluctant, are the dispositions of our children to any improving exercise. Rewards will hardly win them to the latter; the rod can hardly deter them from the former.—And none, none but God, “by his special grace preventing them, can put into their minds good desires.”§

* Isa. x. 14.

† Job xxi. 14.

‡ The wings of a fly are supposed to have the quickest motion of any material substance which lives. And if they make, as naturalists imagine, some hundreds of vibrations in a second of time, I think there can be no competition in the case.

§ Collect for Easter-day.

All our affections combine to prove the disorder sin has introduced.

Is our love under better regulation?—How easily are we captivated with a fair complexion and graceful form, especially when set off with the decorations of dress! but how little affected with the beauty of internal character; with the ornaments of virtue, and the graces of christianity? Can it be supposed, that the pulse of the soul beats regularly, when there is such a passionate fondness for fading embellishments, and such a cold indifference for the most substantial endowments?—How ready are we to be enamoured with well-proportioned clay, often to our apparent prejudice, sometimes to our utter ruin! yet how backward to love that infinitely loving and lovely Redeemer, who would die himself, rather than we should become a prey to death. Tinder we are, perfect tinder to the sparks of irrational and dissolute affection; harder than adamant, colder than ice, to this heavenly flame.

Ther. If our love is blind, our fear has not lost her eyes. Fear is quick of apprehension; and instead of being stupidly insensible, is ready to “rise up at the voice of a bird.”*

Asp. The passion of fear is sufficiently active, but deplorably misapplied.—We fear the reproach of men. But are we alarmed at the view of that everlasting shame, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall pour upon the ungodly? We shudder at the drawn dagger, and stand appalled at the head-long precipice. But how often have we defied the sword of almighty vengeance, and sported upon the brink of irretrievable perdition?

Sin is the most pernicious of all evils. Sin violates the divine command, and provokes the divine Majesty. Sin offers despite to the blessed Spirit, and tramples upon the blood of Jesus. For sin, the transgressor is banished from the blissful presence of God, and doomed to dwell with unextinguishable burnings. Do we dread this grand destroyer of our happiness?

* Eccl. xii. 4.

The sagacity of animals in shunning the pleasing snare, furnishes a strong reproof for man.

dread it more than any calamities, more than all plagues?—Take one of those fine may-dukes, which glow with so beautiful a scarlet on yonder espalier. Offer it to the blackbird, that serenades us from the neighbouring elm. The creature, though fond of the dainty, will fly from your hand, as hastily as from a levelled fowling-piece. He suspects a design upon his liberty; and therefore will endure any extremity, will even starve to death, rather than taste the most tempting delicacy in such hazardous circumstances.—Are we equally fearful of an infinitely-greater danger? Do we fly, with equal solicitude,* from the delusive but destructive wiles of sin? Alas! do not we too often swallow the bait, even when we plainly discover the fatal hook? Do we not snatch the forbidden fruit, though conscience remonstrates, though God prohibits, though death eternal threatens?

Ther. Conscience then, according to your own account, has escaped the general shipwreck. Conscience is God's vicegerent in the soul, and executes her office faithfully. Even the Gentiles "shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another."†

Asp. If there be any remains of the divine image, perhaps they are to be found in the conscience; but even this is not exempt from the common ruin.—Consider its light. It is like a dim taper, feebly glimmering, and serving only to make the darkness visible. Or, if it discovers any thing, it is an obscure something, we know not what; which, instead of informing, tantalizes us, and instead of guiding, bewilders

* The instigating admonition, transmitted to Brentius by an anonymous letter, when the papists had formed a plot against his life, should be the rule of our conduct on such an occasion: "Fuge! fuge! cito—citius—citissime."

† Rom. ii. 15. Methinks, I would not translate the word *μῆλαξυ* *the mean time*, but alternately or interchangeably accusing or excusing, sometimes one, sometimes the other; in conformity to the different circumstances of their temper and behaviour.

The unregenerate conscience is a false and delusory guide ;

us. As false and delusory lights on the shore, put a cheat upon the mariner, and lead him on to ruin.*— Consider its operations. It is either dumb or dead, or both. Dumb; or else how vehemently would it upbraid us, for our shocking ingratitude to the supreme omnipotent Benefactor? How loudly would it inveigh against our stupid neglect of spiritual interests, and eternal ages? Dead; otherwise how keenly would it smart, when gashed with wounds,—numerous, as our repeated violations of the divine law,—deep as the horrid aggravations of our various iniquities?

Ther. Do you call this an answer to my objection, Aspasio? If it be an answer, it resembles, in point of satisfactory evidence, the light which you ascribe unto the conscience.

Asp. The Gentiles, you allege, shew the work, but not the love of the law, written on their hearts. Some leading notions of right and wrong they have; some speculative strictures of good and evil; but without a real abhorrence of the one, or a cordial delight in the other: which far from ennobling their nature, far from vindicating their practice, argues the exceeding depravity of the former, and renders the latter absolutely without excuse.

No; you say, conscience excuses the heathens. Rather, their conscience bears witness to the equity of the law, while their thoughts make some weak apology† for the tenor of their conduct. This is far from acquitting, far from justifying them. Besides, these weak attempts to excuse are always founded

* This seems to be have been the case with the bulk of the heathen world.—Conscience arraigned, and found them guilty. This put them upon practising their abominable, sometimes their inhuman idolatries. Nay, this induced them to give the most scandalous and impious misrepresentations of the Deity; that they might sheathe the sting of conscience, and find some salvo for their own iniquities, they made even the objects of their worship, the patrons and the precedents of their favourite vices.

† The word is *απολοβιμενων*, not *επιμαρτυρησιων*, not *δικαιωπατων*.

and but a partial and corrupt accuser.

on ignorance. Did they know themselves, their duty, or their God, conscience would, without the least hesitation, bring in her verdict, guilty.—The apostle assures us, that till faith, which is a divine principle, takes place in our breasts; “both the mind and conscience are defiled:”* here, and elsewhere, very plainly intimating, that the conscience is evil, and ever will be evil, till it is “sprinkled with the blood of Christ.”†

It accuses some, I acknowledge; and it ought to accuse, yea, to condemn all. But even here it evidences itself to be corrupt. For its accusations are sometimes erroneous,‡ and no better than false witness; sometimes partial,§ and suborned by appetite; and very, very often ineffectual.—Nay, when they do take effect, they produce no fruit that is truly good. They work not a genuine humiliation, or an unfeigned repentance; but either a slavish dread of God, as a severe judge; or hatred of him, as an inexorable enemy.

Ther. Hatred of God—Astonishing impiety! Is it possible for the human heart to admit such enormous, almost incredible wickedness?

Asp. You may well be astonished, Theron; and

* Tit. i. 15.

† Heb. x. 22.

‡ Erroneous—What else was that grand article in the accusations of conscience, mentioned, with such particular distinction, by Virgil:

—————Phlegyasque miserrimus omnes
Admonet, et magna testatur voce per umbras,
Dicite justitiam moniti, et non temnere divos.

For men to despise such dunghill, worse than dunghill-deities had been their virtue, if done, and it was their duty to do.—What else was that voice of conscience, mentioned by our Lord, John xvi. 2. or that confessed by the apostle, Acts xxvi. 9.

† Partial—Otherwise how could the most celebrated among the ancient heroes applaud and practise that execrable unnatural crime, self-murder? how could their first-rate historians extol, and almost consecrate that diabolical principle of action, pride? And how could their ablest teachers of morality, not only tolerate, but establish the error, by neglecting to find so much as a name for that amiable virtue, humility?

The black charge of hatred of God, proved against the human race.

God may justly demand; "What iniquity have my people found in me, that they have gone far from me, and have walked after vanity?"* "I created you out of nothing, and endowed you with an immortal soul. As a father, I have provided for you. As a nurse, I have cherished you.—I have consigned over to your possession the earth, and the fulness thereof. All my creatures do you service, and even my angels minister unto your good.—Do you desire greater demonstration of my love? I have given what was dearer to me than all angels, than all worlds. I have given my Son from my bosom, to die in your stead.—Would you have further evidences of my tender, my distinguished regard? Behold! I touch the mountains, and they smoke: I look upon the earth, and it trembles: I cast even the princes of heaven, when they break my law, into chains of darkness. But to you, O men, I condescend to act as a supplicant. Though highly injured, and horribly insulted, I beseech you, again and again I beseech you, to be reconciled."

To hate such a God,† is indeed the most detestable impiety. Yet man, foolish man, practises this impiety, whenever, for the sake of a vile lust, an ignoble pleasure, or an unruly passion, he transgresses the command of his Creator.

Shall I exemplify the doctrine, in another of the affections?

Ther. In truth, Aspasio, I begin to be sick of the subject. If human nature is so ulcerated, the less you touch it the better.—However, let us not quite omit the irascible appetite.

Asp. Of this we have already taken a side-view; if you chuse to see it in fuller proportion, make your

* Jer. ii. 5.

† Hatred of God is so shocking an expression, that one would almost wish never to hear or read it. But it occurs in our unerring book; is too often exemplified in common life; and is engraven, by corrupt nature, on every human heart. See Rom. i. 30. Exod. xx. 5, John xv. 25, Rom. viii. 7.

The depravity of the irascible faculty, exemplified in the character of Fervidus.

observation on Fervidus.—Fervidus comes home in a rage. His cheeks are pale, and his lips quiver, with excess of passion. Though he can hardly speak, he vows revenge, and utters imprecations.—What is the cause of all this wondrous ferment? A neighbour, it seems, has dropt some reflecting hint, or a servant has blundered in some trifling message. Such usage, Fervidus says, is intolerable, and such negligence unpardonable.—This same Fervidus has offered numberless affronts to his Maker; he has most scandalously neglected the will of his almighty Lord; yet feels no indignation against himself.—He is all fury, when his own credit is touched. But when the interest of Christ is wounded, he can sit unconcerned, or pass it off with a laugh.—Anger, I acknowledge, is sometimes becoming and useful. But is this its right temperature? this its proper application?

Ther. This is the practice only of some few turbulent spirits. To saddle their qualities upon every person, is a procedure just as equitable, as the madman's* calculation was reasonable, who took an account of every ship which entered the harbour, and set it down for his own.

Asp. The latter part of my charge, I fear, is applicable to more than a few.—However, let us consider the most calm sedate minds. How are they affected under injuries? Do they never aggravate failings into crimes? Do they find it easy to abstain from every emotion of ill-will; easy to love their enemies, and do good to those who hate them? These godlike tempers, if our nature was not degenerated, would be the spontaneous produce of the soul. But now, alas! they are not raised without much difficulty; seldom come to any considerable degree of eminence; never arrive at a state of true perfection. An undoubted proof that they are exotics, not natives of the soil.

Now we are speaking of plants, cast your eye upon the kitchen-garden. Many of those herbs will per-

* Thrasilus, an Athenian.

The pollution of the fancy.

fume the hard hand which crushes them, and embalm the rude foot which tramples on them. Such was the benign conduct of our Lord. He always overcame evil with good. When his disciples disregarded him in his bitter agony, he made the kindest excuse for their ungrateful stupidity.* When his enemies, with unparalleled barbarity, spilt his very blood, he pleaded their ignorance, as an extenuation of their guilt.†—Is the same spirit in us, which was also in our divine Master? Then are our passions rightly poised, and duly tempered. But if resentment kindle, and animosity rankle in our hearts; this is an infallible sign, that we swerve from our Saviour's pattern; consequently, are fallen from our primitive rectitude.

Ther. What say you to the fancy? This sure, if no other, retains the primitive rectitude. What pictures does she form, and what excursions does she make? She can dive to the bottom of the ocean, can soar to the height of the stars, and walk upon the boundaries of the creation.

Asp. That the fancy is lively and excursive, I readily grant. It can out-travel the post, or out-fly the eagle. But if it travel only to pick shells; or fly abroad, to bring home mischief; then, I apprehend, though you should admire the faculty, you will hardly be in raptures with its agency.—This is the real truth. Our fancy, till divine grace regulate and exalt its operations, is generally employed in picking painted shells, or culling venomous herbs; weaving (as the prophet very elegantly, and no less exactly describes the case) “the spider's web, or hatching cockatrice-eggs:”‡ busied in the most absurd impertinencies, or acting in speculation the vilest iniquities. That which should be “a garden inclosed, a fountain sealed,”§ for the Prince of peace, is the thoroughfare of vanity.—And even when we are renewed from above, O! how necessary is it to keep an incessant watch, and exercise a

* Matt. xxvi. 41.

† Isa. lix. 5.

‡ Luke xxiii. 34.

§ Cant. iv. 12.

The memory impaired and disordered.

strict discipline over this volatile, variable, treacherous vagrant !

The memory, as well as the fancy, is impaired ; or if not impaired, is debauched. Why else does it firmly retain the impressions of an injury, but so easily let slip the remembrance of a benefit? Any idle fopperies, which soothe our vanity, and increase our corruption, cleave to the thoughts, as the vexatious bur to our clothes. While the noble truths of the gospel, and the rich mercies of a gracious God, slide away from the mind, and leave no lasting trace behind them.—This double perverseness is very emphatically and too truly represented by Jeremiah ; “ Can a maid forget her ornaments, or a bride her attire? Yet my people have forgotten me days without number.”*—If we hear a loose hint, or read an immodest expression, they are almost sure to fasten themselves on our memory. If shaken off, they follow us with a troublesome importunity. If excluded as unwelcome visitants, they force themselves, again and again, upon our imagination. They dog us to the closet ; they haunt our most retired hours ; and too often disturb our very devotions. Tell me now, can that faculty be upright and uncorrupted, which is a perforated sieve, to transmit the beneficial ; but a thirsty sponge, to imbibe the pernicious †

Ther. Well, my friend, whatever guilt I or others have contracted, flattery, I dare be positive, is none of yours. Human nature has received no heightening or adulatory touches from your pencil. You have portrayed her foolish and beastly, and every thing bad but devilish.

Asp. And this, even this abomination I must not

* Jer. ii. 32.

† This, I think, suggests an unanswerable confutation of that specious argument, frequently used in behalf of some fashionable and dissolute diversions. “ They are interspersed,” say their admirers, “ with sentiments of virtue, and maxims of morality.”—Should we admit the truth of this plea ; yet the depraved disposition of mankind is pretty sure to drop the morality, and carry away the ribaldry.

Envy, the disposition of devils, proved also against human nature.

secrete, I dare not except.—Envy is a devilish disposition. It subsists no where, but in damned spirits and fallen souls. Yet, infernal as it is, it has been found in persons of the most exalted character. The magnanimous Joshua felt its cankerous tooth.* The disciples of the blessed Jesus were soured with its malignant leaven.† An apostle declares, that “the spirit which dwelleth in us lusteth to envy;”‡ is impetuously prone to that detestable temper.

Lying is confessedly a diabolical practice, yet how unaccountably forward are our children to utter falsehood? As soon as they are born, they go astray; and as soon as they speak, they speak lies.—I said unaccountably. But I recall the expression. The cause is evident. They have lost the image of the God of truth; and are become like that apostate spirit, who “is a liar, and the father of it.”§

What think you of malice, of hate, and revenge? Are they not each a species of murder, and the seed of the old serpent? Unless, therefore, we are entirely free from all these hellish emotions, we must, we must acknowledge that the prince of this world has his party within us.|| May the almighty hand of our God extirpate and subdue it, day by day!

You tell me, I am no flatterer.—Should a person who professes himself the friend of his fellow-creatures, soothe them into a false peace! should he bolster them up in a groundless conceit of their excellency, when they really are no better than “an unclean thing?”—Shall the surgeon assure his patient, “all is well,” even when the mortification has taken place, and the gangrene is spreading? This were to refine the first out of all benevolence, and to flatter the last into his grave.

A disputant of less complaisance than my Theron, would probably ask, with a contemptuous sneer, “Have you then been drawing your own picture?”

* Numb. xi. 19. † Matt. xx. 24. ‡ Jam. iv. 5.

§ John viii. 44. || John xiv. 30.

Man's propensity to pride affords the most disgusting proof of his depravity.

To whom I would reply, with confusion and sorrow, "I have:" alleging this only, to moderate my confusion, that I am daily seeking, by prayer and watchfulness, more and more, "to put off this old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts."* And to alleviate my sorrow, I am endeavouring continually to remember, that, however unworthy I am, however vile I may have been, my adored Redeemer's righteousness is perfect; and in this righteousness every believer is to make his boast.

Ther. So then man is blind in his understanding; perverse in his will; disorderly in his affections; influenced by dispositions, which are partly brutal and partly diabolical.—I have often heard you extol, in terms of high admiration, the virtue of humility. You have lavished all the riches of eloquence, when haranguing on poverty of spirit. If such be the condition of mankind, they have infinite cause to be poor in spirit. They must, therefore, have one excellency left; and according to your own account, a very distinguishing one.

Asp. Scarce any thing displays, in a more glaring light, the extreme depravity of man, than his strong propensity to pride, notwithstanding so much vileness and so many deformities.—Should the noisome leper admire the beauty of his complexion, or the impotent paralytic glory in the strength of his sinews; would they not be mistaken, even to a degree of sottishness and frenzy? Yet for man, fallen man who has lost his original righteousness, which was the true ornament of his nature; who is become subject to base and sordid lusts, or (as the apostle speaks) is earthly and sensual,—for him to be proud, is still more absurdly wicked. And since this is the case, I cannot acquit him from the last and heaviest article of the sacred writer's charge; I have a fresh and more convincing proof, that we do him no wrong, when we call his nature, his disposition, his wisdom—devilish.†

* Eph. iv. 22.

† James iii. 15.

Unreasonable anger a proof of latent pride.

Ther. Why do you reckon pride an universally prevailing corruption? I see no ground for such a dishonourable suspicion. I hope, I myself am an instance to the contrary. To unguarded sallies of passion, to several other faults, I confess myself subject; but cannot think that I am proud.

Asp. Ah! Theron, if you was not proud, you would not be passionate. Unreasonable anger always proceeds from an overweening opinion of our own worth.—One who, besides his acquired knowledge of human nature, had the supernatural gift of discerning spirits, is observed to join humility and meekness;* intimating, that they are amiable twins; and where one exists, the other cannot be absent.—Always consistent with himself, he links together the opposite vices, “heady and high-minded,”† not obscurely hinting, that those who are easily provoked, are certainly proud.—Shall I add, without offence, if we fancy our minds to be clear from the weeds of vanity, and our thoughts free from the workings of self-admiration, it is a most pregnant symptom that we are over-run with the former, abandoned to the latter, and blinded by both.

Pride was the first sin that found entrance into our nature; and it is, perhaps, the last that will be expelled.—What are all our afflictions, but a remedy provided for this inveterate disease; intended to “hide pride from man.”‡ What is the institution of the gospel, but a battery erected against this strong hold of Satan? ordained to “cast down every high imagination.”§ Though that remedy is often applied, though this battery is continually playing, yet the peccant humour is not entirely purged off, nor the elatement of spirit totally subdued, till mortality is swallowed up of life.

Pride is the sin which most easily besets us. “Who can say, I have made my heart clean”|| from this iniquity? It defiles our duties, and intermingles itself with our very virtues. It starts up, I know not how, in our

* Eph. iv. 2. † 2 Tim. iii. 4. ‡ Job xxxiii. 17.

§ 2 Cor. x. 4, 5. || Prov. xx. 9.

The most eminent saints have complained of pride.

most solemn hours, and our most sacred employs.—The good Hezekiah, whose prayers were more powerful than all the forces of Sennacherib, was not proof against the wiles of this subtile sorceress.* Even the great apostle, who had been caught up into the third heavens, was in danger of being puffed up with pride; in such great danger, that it was necessary to put a lancet into the gathering tumor; or, as he himself expresses it, to fix a “thorn in his flesh,† and permit the messenger of Satan to buffet him.

How pathetically is this corruption lamented, and how truly described, by “a sweet singer of our Israel!”

But pride, that busy sin,
Spoils all that I perform;
Curs'd pride! that creeps securely in,
And swells a haughty worm.

Thy glories I abate,
Or praise thee with design;
Part of thy favours I forget,
Or think the merit mine.

The very songs I frame
Are faithless to thy cause;
And steal the honours of thy name,
To build their own applause.†

Ther. Now, I presume, you have given the last touches to your distorted portrait.

Asp. There are other disagreeable and shocking features. But those I shall cast into shades, or hide under a veil. One particular you must allow me to add, which, like a sullen air in the countenance, throws aggravated horror over the whole. I mean, an inclination to be fond of our slavery.

In other instances, “the captive exilè hasteth to be loosed.”§ But here we prefer bondage to freedom, and are loth to leave our prison. Of this, our backwardness to self-examination, is both a consequence and a proof. Self-examination, under the agency of the Spirit, would open a window in our dungeon;

* 2 Chron. xxxii. 25.

† Watt's Hor. Lyr.

† 2 Cor. xii. 7.

§ Isa. li. 14.

The worst effect of depravity is, our aversion to renewing grace.

would shew us our wretched condition, and teach us to sigh for deliverance.—Why have we such a dislike of reproof? Because we hug our chains, and choose darkness rather than light. Reproof is more grating than the harshest discord, though it tends to dissolve the enchantment, and rescue us from the tyranny of sin. While flattery, which abets the delusion, and strengthens the spell, is music in our ears.—Is not our reason, which should arraign and condemn every irregularity, forward to invent excuses, and to spare the favourite folly? Reason, which should unsheathe the dagger, superinduces the mask; and instead of striking at the heart of our vices, screens them under the cover of some plausible names. A wicked habit is called a human infirmity; insnaring diversions pass for innocent amusements; a revengeful disposition is termed spirit, gallantry, and honour. Thus our reason (if, when so egregiously perverted, it deserves the name) is ingenious to obstruct our recovery, and rivets on the shackles our passions have formed.*

This the eternal Wisdom foresaw, and therefore uttered that tender expostulation; “How long, ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity, and scorners delight in their scorning, and fools hate knowledge?” Even the inestimably precious knowledge of an all-atoning and completely-justifying Saviour; who preaches, who has purchased, and who works deliverance,—preaches in his word, has purchased by his blood, and works by his Spirit, deliverance for the captives, the wretched captives of ignorance, sin, and death.

This I take to be the most flagrant and deplorable effect of depravity,—our aversion to the doctrine, the privileges, the grace of the gospel. Beware, dear Theron, lest you prove my point by—shall I speak it?

* Perhaps, this is what our Lord means, when developing the human heart, and discovering its latent enormities, he closes the dark account with *αφροσυνη*, foolishness; implying that stupidity, which has no sense of its misery; that perverseness, which has no inclination for a recovery; both which render all the other evils far more inveterate, Mark vii. 22.

To declare man's corrupt nature, is to act the part of a faithful physician.

would you suspect it?—your own practice. Zealous as I am for my tenets, I should be sorry, extremely sorry, to have such a demonstration of their truth.

Ther. You are highly obliging, Aspasio, to single me out for your evidence. Yet why should the honour be appropriated to myself? It belongs, upon the foot of the preceding calculation, not to your friend only, but to the whole species.—If you was aiming at none but the licentious and abandoned, you would have none to oppose you but persons of that character.—Your arrows of satire would then be rightly levelled, and might be serviceable to mankind. Whereas to put all in the black list, to mark all with the villain's brand; this can never be christian charity, this is insufferable censoriousness.

Asp. Let me beseech you, Theron, not to misapprehend my design. I speak not as a malevolent satirist, but would imitate the faithful physician. I am opening the sore, that it may admit the healing balm; and should I perform the operation with an envenomed instrument? My soul abhors the thought.—I must intreat you likewise to remember the distinction between a state of nature and a state of grace. We are all naturally evil. Such we should for ever continue, did not a supernatural power intervene; making some to differ, both from their original selves, and from the generality of their neighbours.—Are they not refined in their temper, and reformed in their life? I grant it. But then it is the influence of the sanctifying Spirit, which purges away their dross, yet not without leaving some alloy.

Ther. Here, Aspasio, you certainly strain the bow till it breaks; since scripture itself celebrates some persons, as absolutely perfect.—What says Moses, the inspired historian? “Noah was perfect in his generation.”*—What says the God of Moses, who can neither deceive nor be deceived? “Job was a perfect man and an upright.”†—Consequently their nature must be

* Gen. iv. 9.

† Job i. 1.

The perfection ascribed to some scripture saints is not to be considered absolute ;

entirely cleansed from this hereditary defilement ; and their character confutes your derogatory representations of mankind.

Asp. Those eminent saints were perfect ; that is, they were sanctified throughout ; sanctified in all their faculties ; no one grace of religion was lacking. As in the new-born infant, there is a human creature complete ; no constituent part of the vital frame is wanting : though each is tender, all are very feeble, and none arrived at the full size.

They were upright. This word seems to be explanatory of the preceding ; and signifies an unfeigned desire, joined with a hearty endeavour, to obey the whole will of God ; excluding, not all defect, but all-reigning hypocrisy, and wilful remissness.—The interpretation, thus limited, is of a piece with their conduct. If stretched to a higher pitch, it is evidently inconsistent with the narrative of their lives.

Pray, what was your motive for decorating the silvan retirement (which sheltered us yesterday) with the statue of Elijah ?

Ther. Because I thought his solitary life, and gloomy temper, suited that sequestered bower ; because the memorable adventure there represented is, with me, a favourite portion of sacred history.

Are we pleased with spirited and delicate raillery ? Nothing exceeds his pungent sarcasm on the stupid and despicable dupes of idolatry. Every sentence is keen as a razor, and pointed as a dagger, yet wears the appearance of the most courtly complaisance. We may truly say, in the beautiful language of the psalmist, “ His words are smoother than oil, and yet they be very swords.”*

Are we delighted with instances of magnanimity ? A single prophet, unsupported by any human aid, maintains the cause of truth, against the king, his

* 1 Kings xviii. 27. And it came to pass at noon, that Elijah mocked them, and said, “ Cry aloud : for he is a God. Either he is talking, or he is pursuing, or he is on a journey, or peradventure he sleepeth, and must be awaked.”

Elijah, Moses, and Peter, are instances.

grandees, and hundreds of the apostate priests. He ventures to stake all his credit, to risk his very life, and (what was dearer to him than personal credit or bodily life) the honour of the true God, and interests of his holy religion,—to risk all on the immediate interposition of a most surprising miracle.

Do we admire the triumphs of faith? His faith was, in a manner, omnipotent. He prays, and torrents of fire descend from the sky, to devour his adversaries.*—He prays again, and the sluices of heaven are shut: there is neither dew nor rain for several years.†—A third time he prays, and the windows from on high are opened; abundance of showers water the earth.‡—On another occasion he presents his supplications, and God makes his feet like hart's feet, insomuch that an aged prophet out-runs the royal chariot.§

Asp. I commend your taste, Theron; and am particularly pleased with the reasons of your choice.—But do you not remember, that even the wonder-working Tishbite failed in his resignation, and failed in his faith! Eminent as he was for mortification, he gave way to unreasonable discontent; and, though a champion for the living God, he yielded to unbelieving fear.||—“The man Moses was very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth:”¶ yet he, even he was provoked in his spirit, and spake unadvisedly with his lips.** Was not Peter the hero

* 2 Kings i. 10.

† 1 Kings xvii. 1.

‡ James v. 17, 18.

§ 1 Kings xviii. 46.

|| Elias, or rather Elijah, “was a man subject to like passions as we are,” Jam. v. 17. Upon which passage, an eminent commentator makes the following remark: “This probably is said, with respect to his fear and discontent, manifested 1 Kings xix. 3, 4.—*Ομοιοπαθης* must, I think, imply a state liable to the irregular workings of passion; not free from the sinful infirmities of nature. Otherwise, it is an instance foreign to the purpose; does by no means answer the end designed, which is to encourage the heart, and strengthen the faith, even of frail, corrupt, offending creatures. See verse 16.

¶ Numb. xii. 3.

** Psa. cvi. 33.

The twilight a just emblem of the imperfect holiness of the best of saints.

among our Lord's followers? Yet he trembles, more than trembles, at the shaking of a leaf; he denies his divine Master, scared by the voice of a woman.

Look wherever we will, we find proofs of human depravity reigning uncontrolled in some, making frequent insurrection in all. It is written on our hearts, by the pen of experience; the finger of observation points it out, in the practice of others;—even in the practice of those who have been saints of the first rank, and of the highest endowments. Yet they were defective; defective too in that very quality which was their distinguishing gift, in which they particularly excelled.

Ther. While we are talking, the day has insensibly stole itself away, and left us surrounded with twilight: which is a sort of lustre intermingled with darkness; no part wholly lucid, no part wholly obscure.—An emblem, according to your representation, of the renewed soul, and its imperfect holiness.

Asp. A very just one.—Even where the gospel shines, still there is an incurrent gloom of corruption. Ignorance mixes itself with our knowledge. Unbelief cleaves to our faith. Nor is our purity free from all contamination.—The prophet Zechariah, foretelling the establishment of the gospel kingdom, and describing the state of its spiritual subjects, says, “It shall come to pass in that day, that the light shall not be clear nor dark.”* This, as to its literal sense, we now see exemplified in the circumambient atmosphere. With regard to its spiritual meaning, every true believer feels it accomplished in his own breast.

Ther. While you are vehement in decrying all human attainments, consider, Aspasio, whether you do not check and dispirit us in the pursuit of exalted virtue.

Asp. I suppose, you never expected to be such an

* Zech. xiv. 6. 1 Cor. xiii. “For we know in part.” Perhaps the declaration of the apostle may be a key to the prophet's meaning. However, it is a sufficient confirmation of Aspasio's sentiment.

Theron is challenged to try his own efforts at perfect obedience.

adept in geometry as Archimedes, nor so profound an astronomer as Newton; yet this did not check your application to the study of mathematics, or the contemplation of the heavens.—Your brother the merchant, I presume, has no prospect of amassing the wealth of a Cræsus, or the immense treasures of a Kouli-Khan; yet this does not dispirit him in prosecuting the business which brings him both opulence and honour.

However, Theron, so long as you deny the imputation of Christ's righteousness, I must acknowledge you act a consistent part, in being zealous for the perfection of personal obedience. You ought either to acquire the one, or to accept the other. Therefore I shall produce no other arguments for your discouragement; but shall comprise the whole of my answer, in the motto to an Irish nobleman's arms, *Try*. Or, if this be too concise, I will subjoin, with a very little alteration, the words of a king; "When you have attained what you pursue, bring me word again, that I may go and possess it also."*

Ther. According to your account, the most advanced and established christians are but like a company of invalids. Does not this extremely derogate from the honour of our Lord, considered as the Physician of souls? It seems to make a mere nothing of sanctification, and would swallow up Christ the King in Christ the Priest.

Asp. Invalids they are; † and such will continue till

* Matt. ii. 8.

† Do not the best of men lament their ignorance of the divine perfections, their slowness of heart to believe the divine promises, and the languor of their gratitude for inestimable, for innumerable gifts of the divine goodness?—Do they not frequently feel deadness in their devotions, disorder in their affections, and various other relics of the original leaven!—Do they not often complain in the language of the apostle, "When I would do good, evil is present with me!"—and say with the earliest christians, "We that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened:" burdened, not so much with affliction; those heroes in christianity had learned to rejoice in tribulation: but burdened with a sense of their spiritual infirmities, and with the work-

Perfection of piety in this life would supersede the atonement of Christ.

they are dismissed from this great infirmary, and admitted into that holy, happy, blessed world; "where the Inhabitant shall no more say, I am either in soul or in body sick."*

If the cure was never to be completed, this doubtless would be dishonourable to our almighty Physician. But the spiritual recovery, begun on earth, and advancing through time, will be perfected in heaven, and prolonged to eternity.—Does this make a mere nothing of sanctification? No, but it makes room for a continual progress, and affords cause for continual humiliation. It reserves a most exalted prerogative for the heavenly state and beatific vision; and perpetually reminds us of a most important truth, that our present blessedness consists not in being free from all sin, but in having no sin imputed to us.†

This imperfection of our obedience, instead of confounding, maintains a proper distinction between Christ the King, and Christ the Priest. Whereas, if we were perfect in piety, the priestly office, with regard to us, would be superseded. What need of an intercessor to recommend our prayers? what occasion for an high priest to "bear the iniquity of our holy things?"‡ if some taint of the original leaven did not pollute our best services?

Neither does this detract from the wisdom, from the goodness, or from the power of Christ. It rather administers to the advantageous display of all these divine attributes.—Of his wisdom, in conducting the affairs of his church with such exact propriety, that the righteousness of faith may have its due honour,

ings of their inbred corruption; which, to a tender and lively believer, are the heaviest of crosses, and the most galling of loads.—Nay, do not the heirs of glory wash their very robes, even their fairest deeds, and their brightest graces, "in the blood of the Lamb!" which, if they were free from spot, and void of impurity, need not be made white in this sacred fountain. See 2 Cor. v. 4. Rev. vii. 14.

* Isa. xxxiii. 24.

† Psa. xxxii. 2.

‡ Exod. xxviii. 33. Id est, expiare peccata, quibus sanctissima cæteroquin actiones nostræ inquinatæ sunt. *Wits. de Occon.*

Our own imperfections may teach us to be humble and compassionate.

and the sanctification of the Spirit its proper esteem.—Of his goodness, in carrying on the work of grace, amidst so much infirmity, and so many corruptions; and in crowning, with consummate happiness, such frail undeserving creatures.—Of his power, in extracting a variety of benefits even from—

Ther. Benefits, Aspasio!—Can any thing beneficial proceed from an evil, which, according to your own representation, is so incorrigibly malignant?

Asp. It will tend to make us lowly in our own eyes. When we remember, that by nature we are altogether become abominable; that the remains of natural depravity still adhere to our minds; how must such a view of ourselves cover us with shame, and lay us low in abasement! “Less than the least of all thy mercies,”* will be the language of such a one’s very soul.

It will dispose us to compassionate others. How can we take a brother by the throat, and require faultless perfection in his behaviour, when we ourselves in many things offend, in all things fall short? Every such consideration rebukes, what I may call spiritual unmercifulness; it pleads for tenderness and forbearance to our fellow-creatures; is a monitor within, and whispers that affecting remonstrance, “Oughtest not thou to have compassion upon thy fellow-servant,” since thy almighty Lord hath such renewed, such unwearied “pity on thee?”†

It will teach us to admire the riches of grace. Shall fallen creatures, that are taken from the very dunghills of sin, and rescued from a hell of inward iniquity,—shall they, notwithstanding their deplorable depravity, and innumerable deficiencies,—shall they be admitted into the bosom of eternal love? they be exalted to the thrones of glory, and numbered with the princes of heaven? This is grace, transcendently rich, and divinely free indeed!

Will it not reconcile us to the approach of death? This, methinks, like wormwood on the nipple, or gall

* Gen. xxxiii. 10.

† Matt. xviii. 33.

Our indwelling corruptions tend to wean us from the world,

in the cup, must tend to wean us from the world. How can we be enamoured with such a land of darkness, and such a vale of tears? Or why should we covet, when Providence gives the signal for our departure, to prolong our abode in these territories of disorder?—Surely this must incline us to leave them every day, more and more, in our affections; and at last to leave them, without any reluctance, by final dissolution: leave them, for that better country, where our personal righteousness will no longer be defective, like the waning moon; but shine forth with consummate lustre, like the meridian sun, in the kingdom of our Father.

It will endear the blessed Jesus in every capacity; as the stings of the fiery flying serpents, and the dearth of the waste howling wilderness, endeared to the Israelites both their miraculous antidote, and their bread from heaven.—They who believe this truth, must see their inexpressible and incessant need of Christ's Spirit. The protestation of Moses, on a particular occasion, will be the daily, the hourly breathing of their souls; "Carry us not up hence, unless thy presence, thy Spirit go with us."* For without this aid we can discharge no duty aright, nor successfully resist any temptation.—They will be exceedingly cautious, not to "grieve"† that sacred guest, lest he depart from them, and abandon them to the power of their lurking corruptions: knowing that if he abandon them, when such foes are within, and so many snares without, their case will be worse than Samson's, when his locks were shaven, and the Philistines all around him.

How highly will such persons value the blood of the covenant, and the intercession of their great High Priest!—They will no more presume to enter into the presence of the most high God, without a fiducial reliance upon the atoning and interceding Saviour; than the sons of Jacob would have ventured to appear be-

* Exod. xxxiii. 15.

† Eph. iv. 30.

and enhance our value of the Saviour's perfect obedience.

fore the viceroy of Egypt, without the company of their younger brother.* In all, in all their intercourse with heaven, the great Propitiation will be their plea, and the great Advocate their confidence.—The impotent man waited at the pool of Bethesda, and the Syrian general dipped seven times in Jordan. These persons will not only wait, but live by the fountain opened for sin and uncleanness.† They will wash in the sacred sanctifying stream, not seven times only, but seventy times seven.

And when such sentiments possess the mind, how dear, O how dear and desirable will our Lord's obedience be! I called sometime ago, our own works worm-eaten things; and must not these corruptions, if they remain ever so little in the heart, tarnish our graces, and debase our duties? Must they not be depreciatory to all our accomplishments; and too much like corroding vermin, in the substance of our timber, or at the core of our fruits?—Should we not then renounce, utterly renounce, these tarnished worm-eaten things; and rely, wholly rely, for everlasting acceptance, on our divine High Priest? who, in his mediatorial works, as well as in his wonderful person, is altogether light and perfection;‡ and neither in him, nor in them, is there any deficiency or darkness at all.

Excuse me, Theron; I fear I have been preaching. The importance of the text must form my apology. It is an introduction, not to the records of history,

* Gen. xliii. 5.

† Zech. xiii. 1.

‡ Light and perfection.—This is the meaning of that mysterious ornament, which in the grand officiating robes of the Jewish high-priest was annexed to the breast plate, and styled Urim and Thummim. Only the Hebrew words are in the plural number, and denote every degree of illumination, and all kinds of perfection.—Does not this very significantly teach sinners, whence to seek their wisdom, and where to look for their perfection; there never was, in all ages, more than one Urim and Thummim; and only one person, in each generation, was appointed to wear it. And who is there, in all worlds, that can give us heavenly knowledge, but the Spirit of Christ? What is there, in ourselves or all creatures, that can present us unblameable before God, but the obedience of Christ?

The subject reviewed.

or the transactions of philosophy, but to the riches of Christ.

Ther. If my Aspasio has been preaching, I can assure him for his comfort, that his audience has been very attentive; and though the sermon was somewhat copious, the hearer neither slept nor gaped.—However, I should be glad to have the whole reviewed, and summed up; that, if it has been large as the pyramid, it may, like the pyramid, terminate in a point.

Asp. This then is the state of our nature.—The image of the Creator is lost; blindness is in the understanding; disorder in all the affections.—In the will, enmity against God the sovereign good; inability to all that is spiritual and heavenly; with a propensity to whatever it sordid and earthly.—The whole soul is deformed, distempered, rebellious.—And shall such a creature lay claim to those amiable and sacred endowments, which may be a proper recommendation to infinite holiness?—Is such a creature qualified to perform those righteous acts, which may approve themselves to the demand of God's law, and to the inflexibility of his justice?

Should he conceive the vain hope, or make the vainer attempt, I would now address him, as Jehoash formerly answered Amaziah. Amaziah king of Judah, elated with the little victories he had obtained over the Edomites, began to fancy himself invincible. Prompted by this foolish imagiuation, he challenges Jehoash king of Israel, to meet him in a pitched battle; and receives this ironical apologue, by way of reply;—which for gallantry of spirit and delicacy of wit, for poignancy of satire and propriety of application, has seldom been equalled, perhaps never exceeded:—"The thistle that was in Lebanon, sent to the cedar that was in Lebanon, saying, Give thy daughter to my son to wife: and there passed by a wild beast that was in Lebanon, and trod down the thistle."* What are we, when we offer to establish our own righteousness, or presume to

* Kings xiv. 9.

Theron alone in the fields.

justify ourselves before the most high God, but despicable thistles, that fancy themselves stately cedars? And is not every temptation, is not each corruption, a wild beast of the desert, which will trample on the impotent boaster, and tread his haughty pretensions in the dust?

DIALOGUE XIV.

ASPASIO was employed in preparing for his journey. Theron, free from business, and disengaged from company, had the greatest part of the day to himself. Which he spent in reviewing the substance of their late conferences; not without intermingled aspirations to God, for the guidance of his divine Spirit.

At evening he went, like the patriarch of old, "into the field to meditate;"* amidst the calm of nature, to meditate on the grace of the gospel.—The sky was peculiarly beautiful, and perfectly clear; only where the fine indigo received an agreeable heightening; by a few thin and scattered clouds; which imbibed the solar rays, and looked like pensile fleeces of purest wool.—All things appeared with so mild, so majestic, so charming an aspect, that, intent as he was upon a different subject, he could not but indulge the following soliloquy.

"How delightful are the scenes of rural nature! especially to the philosophic eye, and contemplative mind.—I cannot wonder that persons in high life are so fond of retiring from a conspicuous and exalted station, to the covert of a shady grove, or the margin of a cooling stream; are so desirous of quitting the smoky town, and noisy street, in order to breathe

* Gen. xxiv, 63.

Theron's soliloquy on the charms of rural nature.

purer air, and survey the wonders of creation, in the silent, the serene, the peaceful villa.

“Tis true, in the country there are none of the modish, I had almost said, meretricious ornaments of that false politeness, which refines people out of their veracity; but an easy simplicity of manners, with an unaffected sincerity of mind. Here the solemn farce of ceremony is seldom brought into play, and the pleasing delusions of compliment have no place. But the brow is the real index of the temper, and speech the genuine interpreter of the heart.

“In the country, I acknowledge, we are seldom invited to see the mimic attempts of human art. But we, every where, behold the grand and masterly exertions of divine power.—No theatre erects its narrow stage, surrounds it with puny rows of ascending seats, or adorns it with a shifting series of gorgeous scenery. But fields extend their ample area; at first, lightly clad with a scarf of springing green; then, deeply planted with an arrangement of spindling stalks; as a few more weeks advance, covered with a profusion of bearded or husky grain; at last, richly laden with a harvest of yellow plenty.

“Meadows disclose their beautiful bosom; yield a soft and fertile lap for the luxuriant herbage; and suckle myriads of the fairest, gayest flowers; which, without any vain ostentation, or expensive finery, outvie each other in all the elegance of dress.—Groves of various leaf; arrayed in freshest verdure, and liberal of their reviving shade, rise, in amiable, in noble prospects, all around.—Droves of sturdy oxen, strong for labour, or fat for the shambles; herds of sleeky kine, with milk in their udders, and violets in their nostrils; flocks of well-fleeced sheep with their snowy lambkins frisking at their side: these compose the living machinery. Boundless tracts of bending azure, varnished with inimitable delicacy, and hung with starry lamps, or irradiated with solar lustre, form the stately ceiling.—While the early breezes, and the evening gales; charged with no unwholesome vapour, breeding

Theron's soliloquy on the charms of rural nature.

no pestilential taint; but fanning the humid buds, and waving their odoriferous wings; dispense a thousand sweets, mingled with the most sovereign supports of health.—And is not this school of industry, this magazine of plenty, incomparably more delightful, as well as infinitely less dangerous, than those gaudy temples of profusion and debauchery, where sin and ruin wear the mask of pleasure; where Belial is daily or nightly worshipped with, what his votaries call, modish recreation and genteel amusement?

“Here indeed is no tuneful voice, to melt in strains of amorous anguish, and transfuse the sickening fondness to the hearer's breast. No skilful artist, to inform the lute with musical enchantment; to strike infectious melody from the viol; and soothe away the resolution and activity of virtue, in wanton desires, or voluptuous indolence.—But the plains bleat, the mountains low, and the hollow circling rocks echo with the universal song. Every valley re-murmurs to the fall of silver fountains, or the liquid lapse of gurgling rills.—Birds, musicians ever beauteous, ever gay, perched on a thousand boughs, play a thousand sprightly and harmonious airs.

“Charmed therefore with the finest views, lulled with the softest sounds, and treated with the richest colours, what can be wanting to complete the design? Here is every entertainment for the eye; the most refined gratifications for the ear; and a perpetual banquet for the smell; without any insidious decoy, for the integrity of our conduct, or even for the purity of our fancy.

“O ye blooming walks, and flowry lawns, surrounded with dewy landscapes! how often have patriots and heroes laid aside the burden of power, and stole away from the glare of grandeur, to enjoy themselves in your composed retreats!*—Ye mossy couches, and fragrant bowers, skirted with cooling cascades! how many illustrious personages, after all their glorious toil for

* ————— Mihi me reddentis agelli,

says Horace of his little country seat.

Theron's reflections on the past conferences.

the public good, have sought an honourable and welcome repose in your downy lap?—Ye venerable oaks, and solemn groves; woods, that whisper to the quivering gale; cliffs that overhang the darkened flood; who can number the sages and saints, that have devoted the day to study, or resigned a vacant hour to healthy exercise, beneath your sylvan porticoes and waving arches; that, far from the dull impertinence of man, have listened to the instructive voice of God; and contemplated the works of his adorable hand, amidst your moss-grown cells and rocky shades.—How inelegant, or how insensible is the mind, which has no awakened lively relish for these sweet recesses, and their exquisite beauties?

“But whither am I carried? Is not this rural enthusiasm? I find myself talking to trees, and forget the momentous question which waits for our decision. Here then let my rhapsody cease, and my inquiry proceed.—Does it betray a want of true delicacy, to be insensible of nature's charms? My Aspasio thinks, it argues as wrong a taste in practical divinity, not to acquiesce in the imputed righteousness of Jesus Christ. To this doctrine I have always been extremely averse. I set myself to oppose it with objections, drawn from the reason of things, and from various passages of scripture. To all which my friend replied; and though I was scarcely convinced, yet I was silenced by his answers.

I pleaded for the sufficiency of our sincere obedience; especially when accompanied with repentance, and recommended by the merit of Christ.—Neither was this attempt successful. His arguments, somewhat like the flaming sword planted at the entrance of

* Virgil was so smitten with the amiableness of these scenes, that he assigns them as an habitation for happy spirits, in the regions of Elysium.

———Lucis habitamus opacis,
Riparumque toros, et prata recentia rivis
Incolimus.

Theron's reflections on the past conferences.

paradise, "turned every way,"* and precluded all access to life on the foot of our own duty.

"At length, Aspasio quitted the defensive, and attacked me in his turn. He explained the precepts, and enforced the threatenings of the divine law. So exact its tenor, that it demands a perfect and persevering conformity to every injunction.—So extensive its authority, that it reaches the inmost thoughts; and requires obedience, not barely in the actions of the life, but the very intentions of the heart.—So inexorable its severity, that it condemns every the smallest offence, and curses every the least offender.

"This remonstrance had some of the terror, and almost all the effect, of a masked battery. It was quite unexpected, and alarmed me considerably.—To push his advantage, he enlarged upon the infinite purity of God: a God glorious in holiness; who cannot look upon evil, with any connivance, or without the utmost abhorrence; before whom the very heavens are unclean, and who will in no wise clear the guilty.

"To complete this victory, he played off the doctrine of original guilt, and original depravity:—That, besides the imputation of Adam's apostacy, besides the commission of numberless iniquities, we were born in sin;—are, by nature, enmity against God; in all our faculties corrupt; in every imagination evil; and, even when renewed by grace,† are still, still tainted with some base remains of the old leprosy.

* Gen. iii. 24.

† Even when renewed.—For a display of this important truth, and a remedy against this stubborn evil, let me refer the reader to a little treatise published by Dr. Owen, and entitled, "The nature, power, deceit, and prevalency of the remainders of indwelling sin in believers." The author's pen is indeed a dissecting knife; goes deep into the subject, and lays open this plague of the heart. Like a workman that need not be ashamed, he demonstrates his point from the unerring word of God, and the acknowledged experience of christians. Like a compassionate as well as able physician, he all along prescribes the proper antidote; nay, he shews how the poison may be so over-ruled by the divine grace, and so managed by the watchful patient, as to become medicinal, salutary, and conducive to the most beneficial purposes.

Theron acknowledges himself almost a convert to Aspasio's doctrine.

“After all, he bid me consider,—what fruits must spring from such a nature? how they must appear, when compared with such a law? what they must deserve, when tried before such a God?—These, I must confess, are very weighty and startling queries. If these representations are true, the face of human affairs carries a most gloomy aspect. Or rather, a most dreadful storm is hanging over the children of men.—Aspasio urges me to fly, without any delay, to the covert of Christ's meritorious obedience. This, he says, was wrought out in my name, and in my stead; this will be admitted, both at the throne of grace, and the bar of judgment, as my justifying righteousness.

“This, he adds, opens a way on God's part, for the largest emanations and most honourable exercise of mercy. On man's part, it founds a title to pardon, to life, and every spiritual blessing.—This doctrine, especially in such a connexion, begins to put on a more recommending appearance. My prejudices are really wearing away. I am almost a convert.”

Aspasio overheard the close of these reflections. Unwilling to interrupt his friend in so serious an inquiry, and desirous to observe the issue of so interesting a debate, he had hitherto concealed himself. But thinking this a favourable minute, he stepped forward, and said,—

Asp. Almost! and why not altogether a convert? What should hinder my dear Theron from submitting to so rational a scheme, with the most entire acquiescence? What should hinder him from embracing so comfortable a doctrine with the utmost complacency? Why should he not subscribe, both with hand and heart, that divine decree: “Their righteousness is of me, saith the Lord.”*

Ther. If, by this doctrine, the claims of the law are answered; if the perfections of God are glorified; if the interests of morality are secured; I must acknow-

* Isa. liv. 17.

By Christ's imputed righteousness the law is satisfied, and God's perfections glorified.

ledge, it will be more worthy of acceptance than I could once have imagined.

Asp. And if all these points are not gained, gained too in the most eminent manner, I solemnly declare that I will never plead for imputed righteousness more.

But the claims of the law are all answered.—For there is nothing in its sacred injunctions, which Christ did not perform; and nothing in its awful threatenings, which Christ did not sustain. He fulfilled all its precepts, by an unspotted purity of heart, and the most perfect integrity of life. He exhausted its whole curse, when he hung upon the cross, abandoned by his Father, a bleeding victim for the sins of his people.—This obedience brings higher honour to the divine law, than it could have received from the uninterrupted duty of Adam, and all his posterity, in all their generations.

The perfections of God, which were dishonoured by our rebellion, are glorified.—He appears by this method of justification, inconceivably rich in shewing mercy; yet steady, inflexibly steady, in executing vengeance. The sceptre of grace, and the sword of justice, have each its due exercise, each its full scope. The holiness of the divine nature, and the dignity of the divine government, are not only maintained, but most magnificently displayed. Indeed it is the peculiar excellence of this wonderful expedient, that it renders all the divine attributes supremely venerable, and supremely amiable.

Ther. But are the interests of morality secured? This is what I am strongly inclined to doubt. And, to say the truth, this is now my principal objection to your scheme.

Asp. I shall never blame my friend, for being vigilant and jealous over the interests of morality. If our doctrine had a malignant aspect on true morality, I would give my voice against it, and use all my endeavours to suppress it.—But it is formed with every tendency to awaken the utmost dread of sin, and affect

The interests of morality secured, by the doctrine of imputed righteousness.

us with the warmest sense of our Creator's love. And is not that the strongest barrier against the encroachments of vice? Is not this the sweetest inducement to the practice of virtue?

I am glad to find, that a jealousy for the interests of morality, is the chief obstacle in the way of your assent; because, I am persuaded, it is much of the same nature with those forbidding and mistaken apprehensions, which our ancestors entertained concerning the ocean. They looked upon it as an unsurmountable obstruction to universal society. Whereas it is, in fact, the very cement of society; the only means of accomplishing a general intercourse; and the great highway to all the nations of the earth. What is here affirmed, may on some future occasion be proved.—At present, let me desire you to imagine; rather, may the blessed Spirit enable you to believe, that your sins are expiated, through the death of Jesus Christ: That a righteousness is given you, by virtue of which you may have free and welcome access to God; the merit of which you may plead, for obtaining all the blessings of time and eternity.—Then let me ask, will this alienate your affections from your almighty Benefactor! Will this irritate evil concupiscence, or send you to carnal gratifications in quest of happiness! Quite the reverse. When this faith is wrought in your heart, nothing will be so powerful to produce holy love, and willing obedience; to exalt your desires, and enable you to overcome the world.

What says the apostle? "I through the law am dead to the law."* Being made to understand its spirituality and perfection, I have no longer any hope of justification from my own conformity to its precepts.—Did this prompt him, did this embolden him, to neglect or violate his duty? Hear the sacred writer's own declaration. I am released from the rigour and bondage of the law; I am directed to Christ for righteousness and salvation; that I may live unto God:

* Gal. ii. 29.

Sinners held fast in their slavery, for want of a cordial reception of it.

that my whole life may be devoted to his honour, who has brought me into a state so delightful, into a liberty so glorious.

Ther. This liberty, I am afraid; will be of very little service to the licentious and gay world.

Asp. I shall be in no pain even from the gay world, if once they cordially receive this grace, and are vitally influenced by this doctrine; which, far from dissolving the least obligation to obedience, or weakening any one principle of piety, adds to every other motive the endearing engagements of gratitude, and the winning persuasives of love.

Nay, I verily believe, that multitudes in the gay and licentious world, are held fast in the fatal snare by their ignorance of this sweet, alluring, consolatory truth. They find themselves deeply obnoxious to divine justice, and feel themselves strongly bound with chains of sensuality. They think, it is impossible to clear the enormous score of their guilt; impossible to deliver themselves from the confirmed dominion of sin. Therefore, like desperate debtors, they stifle every serious thought; lest a consciousness of their long arrears, and a prospect of the dreadful reckoning, should "torment them before the time."^{*}

But if they were informed, that the infinitely-merciful Son of God has undertaken to redeem such undone and helpless sinners;—that he has thoroughly expiated the most horrid transgressions, and procured even for ungodly wretches all the needful supplies of strengthening grace;—that, instead of being prohibited, they are invited to partake, freely to partake, of these unspeakable blessings;—were they acquainted with these glad tidings of the gospel, surely they would burst their chains, and spring to liberty. These truths, if once revealed in their hearts, would, of all considerations, be most effectual to "make them free."[†]

What shall I say more, to obtain my Theron's ap-

* Matt. viii. 29.

† John viii. 32.

Father, Son, and Spirit, bear testimony to the doctrine.

probation? Shall I point out and plead the most illustrious precedent? God the Father is well pleased with this righteousness of our Redeemer. He expresses his complacency by the most emphatical words: "Behold my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth."* In Christ and his righteousness, God is not only pleased but delighted: his very soul, every perfection of the Godhead, with ineffable satisfaction, rests and acquiesces in them—I said, ineffable; for he has declared this, in a manner superior to all the energy of language, by raising our crucified Surety from the dead, by exalting him to the heaven of heavens, and placing him at his own right hand in glory.

Our Lord Jesus Christ is well pleased. He esteems it his honour to shine forth as the everlasting righteousness of his people. It is the brightest jewel of his mediatorial crown. In this he sees of the travail of soul, and is satisfied: accounting himself fully recompensed, for all the labours of his life, and all the sorrows of his death, when sinners are washed from their guilt in his blood, and presented faultless by his obedience.

The Holy Spirit is equally pleased with this great transaction, and its noble effects. It is his peculiar office, and favourite employ, to convince the world of their Saviour's righteousness: not only that his nature was spotlessly pure, and his conversation perfectly holy; but that from both results a righteousness, of infinite dignity, and everlasting efficacy; sufficient, throughout all ages sufficient, for the acceptance and salvation of the most unworthy creatures.

Since then this method of acceptance and salvation is excellent and glorious, in the eyes of the adorable Trinity; since it magnifies the law, and yields the most exalted honour to its divine Author; since it makes ample provision for the holiness of a corrupt, and the happiness of a ruined world; why should my

* Isa. xlii, 1.

How Aspasio was led to embrace the doctrine.

friend any longer dislike it, oppose it, or treat it with a cold indifference? Surely all those grand recommendations are enough to over-rule any little objections, which may arise from the suspicions of timidity, or may be started by the artifices of sophistry.

Ther. I know not how it is, Aspasio; but I cannot reconcile myself to this doctrine of imputed righteousness, notwithstanding all the pains you have taken to make me a convert.

Asp. The disappointment is mine, but the loss is yours, Theron.—However, let me intreat you not to reject my sentiments absolutely, nor to condemn them prematurely. Suppose it possible at least, that they may be true; and weigh them in an even balance.—Learn wisdom from your Aspasio's folly. I was once exactly in your situation; saw things in your light, and through your medium.

Conversing, I well remember, with a devout but plain person, our discourse happened to turn upon that solemn admonition: "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself."* I was haranguing upon the import and extent of the duty; shewing, that merely to forbear the infamous action, is little. We must deny admittance, deny entertainment at least, to the evil imagination; and quench even the enkindling spark of irregular desire.—When I had shot a random bolt, my honest friend replied, "There is another instance of self-denial, to which this injunction extends; and which is of very great moment in the christian religion. I mean, the instance of renouncing our own strength, and our own righteousness: not leaning on that for holiness; nor relying on this for justification."—I thought the old man, I must confess, little better than a superstitious dotard; and wondered at (what I then fancied) the motley mixture of piety and oddity and truth in his observation.†

* Matt. xvi. 24.

† Milton thought the same, otherwise he would never have put these words into the mouth of a divine speaker:—

The doctrine of imputed righteousness peculiarly offensive to man's corrupt nature :

Now I perceive, that we ourselves are often the dreamers, when we imagine others to be fast asleep.

Ther. I shall not forget your caution, and will endeavour to avoid the rock on which my Aspasio struck; but happily, it seems, escaped shipwreck.— You may likewise assure yourself, that, upon a subject of exceeding great and eternal consequence, I shall not fail to use the most attentive and impartial consideration: an indolent supineness, or a bigoted obstinacy, in this great crisis of affairs, would be of all errors the most inexcusable, and must prove of all miscarriages the most fatal.

Asp. But still you cannot reconcile yourself.—And no wonder. For this way of salvation runs directly counter to the stream of corrupt nature. It puzzles our reason, and offends our pride. What! shall we, not work, but “believe unto righteousness?”* Shall we receive all freely, and reckon ourselves no better than unprofitable servants? This is a method, to which we should never submit; this is a proposal, which we should always spurn; were not our sentiments rectified, and our hearts new moulded, by sovereign grace.

Let me remind you of a little incident, which you must have read in the Grecian history. A certain stranger came, one day, to dine with some Lacedemonians. They, you know, always sat down at a public table, and were content with the plainest food. The gentleman, accustomed to higher eating, could not forbear expressing his disgust at the homely provision. Sir, said the cook, you don't make use of the sauce.—What do you mean? replied the guest.—You don't use hard exercise; nor habituate yourself to long abstinence; nor bring a sharpened appetite to the meal.—And you, my dear friend, I am apprehensive, have not

—Thy merit
Imputed shall absolve them, who renounce
Their own, both righteous and unrighteous deeds;
And live in thee transplanted, and from thee
Receive new life.

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* Rom. x. 10.

A deep sense of our depravity, the proper preparative to receive it.

the sauce; have not the proper preparative for this salutary doctrine; which is indeed the bread of life, and the very marrow of the gospel.

Ther. What preparative?

Asp. A sense of your great depravity, your extreme guilt, and your utterly undone condition.—While destitute of these convictions, our souls will be like the full stomach, that loathes even the honey-comb.—So long as these convictions are slight, and hover only in the imagination! we shall be like Gallio,* listless, indifferent, and “caring for none of these things.”—But when they are deep, and penetrate the heart, then the righteousness of a Redeemer will be sweet, tasteful, and inviting; as myrrh and frankincense to the smell, as milk and honey to the palate, as gold and treasures to the ruined bankrupt.

* Acts xviii. 47. A late commentator, of distinguished eminence, has attempted to vindicate Gallio's conduct; and would represent it as an amiable instance of prudence and moderation.

According to this apprehension, this Roman governor acted a part both irreligious and unjust.—Irreligious, because he refused to hear the apostle's defence; which was the most likely means of his conversion and salvation. As one great end, why Providence permitted the preachers of the gospel to be brought before the rulers and kings, was that such an incident might serve *εις μαρτυριον αυτοις*, Matt. x. 18. for a testimony (not against, but) to them: that even the potentates of the earth, prejudiced and supercilious as they were, might hereby have an opportunity of hearing the christian doctrine, and seeing its efficacy on the spirits of men.—Unjust, because he permitted Sosthenes, then an innocent person, afterwards a disciple of Christ, (1 Cor. i. 1.) to be so illegally treated, and outrageously abused, without interposing for his rescue. Here was evidently a breach of the peace; a violation of the laws. Of this, therefore, the civil magistrate ought to have taken cognizance: however he might fancy himself discharged the obligation of attending the gospel, or protecting its preachers; however he might imagine himself authorised, to treat divine truths with contempt; and call the striving for the faith, a wrangling about words and names.

Besides, if the Holy Spirit intended to fix a mark of approbation, rather than a brand of infamy upon the proconsul's behaviour; I cannot but think, it would have been expressed in a manner different from—*και εδεν τισιν το Γαλλιονι μιλει*. Which, if it be the language of applause, requires some more than ordinary skill in eriticism, to understand it aright. But, if it be the voice of censure, it is obvious and intelligible to every reader.

Advice how to be convinced of the necessity of Christ's imputed righteousness :

Ther. What method would you advise me to use, in order to get these convictions impressed on my heart.

Asp. Endeavour to understand God's holy law. Consider how pure, how extensive, how sublimely perfect it is. Then judge of your spiritual state, not from the flattering suggestions of self-love, nor from the defective examples of your fellow-creatures, but by this unerring standard of the sanctuary.—Above all, beseech the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, to send his enlightening Spirit into your soul. For indeed, without the enlightening influences of the Spirit, we may have the divine law in our hand; we may comprehend its grammatical meaning; yet be like blind Bartimeus under the meridian sun. It is the blessed Spirit alone, who can rend the veil of ignorance from our minds; and shew us, either “the wonderful things of God's law,” or the glorious mysteries of his gospel. In this sense, our polite poet* speaks a truth, as singularly important, as it is elegantly expressed;

He from thick films shall purge the visual ray,
And on the sightless eye-ball pour the day.

Will you give me leave to propose another expedient? which I believe, may be considerably serviceable in this particular case; which I am assured, will be greatly advantageous in many other respects.

Ther. Backward as I am to adopt your doctrine, I am no enemy to my own interest: therefore shall not only give you leave to propose, but give you thanks for communicating, so valuable an advice.

Asp. It is, in reality, none of mine. It was long ago recommended by your old acquaintance, Horace.† It consists in keeping a diary.

* Mr. Pope, in his charming poem styled the Messiah.

† Ille velut fidis arcana sodalibus olim
Credebat libris: neque si male cesserat usquam
Decurens alio, neque si bene: quo sit, ut omnis
Votiva pateat veluti descripta tabella
Vita senis.

Horat. Sat.

Keeping a diary of our temper and conduct recommended.

Compile a secret history of your heart and conduct.—Take notice of the manner in which your time is spent, and of the strain which runs through your discourse; how often the former is lost in trifles, how often the latter evaporates in vanity. Attend to the principle from which your actions flow; whether from the steady habitual love of God, or from some rambling impulse, and a customary propensity to please yourself. Minute down your sins of omission; how frequently you neglect to glorify your Creator, to edify your fellow-creatures, and to improve yourself in knowledge and holiness.—Observe the frame of your spirit in religious duties. With what reluctance they are undertaken, and with what indevotion performed; with how many wanderings of thought, and how much dulness of desire.—How often, in the common affairs of life, you feel the inordinate sallies of passion, the workings of evil concupiscence, or the intrusion of foolish imaginations.

Register those secret faults, to which none but your own conscience is privy, and which none but the all-seeing eye discerns.—Often review these interesting memoirs. Frequently contemplate yourself in this faithful mirror.—An artist some time ago took a survey of your estate; drew the form, and measured the dimensions, of each inclosure; pictured out every hedge, and scarce omitted a single tree, which grew upon the premises.—Act thus with your will, your understanding, your affections. These are your noble internal demense; of which none but yourself can be a competent surveyor.

Ther. It is unreasonable and preposterous, I must acknowledge, to be minutely exact in meaner matters, and use no accuracy of inspection in the most momentous affairs: to have a correct draught of our lands, which are a transient inheritance; and no map of that everlasting possession, the soul.

Asp. Gratify me then, my dear Theron, in this particular. As I propose to set out very early in the morning, I shall insist upon it, that you do not rise

Self-examination greatly assisted by keeping a diary.

before your usual time, in order to compliment my departure. But I now make it my last wish, and my parting request, that you will, for some months at least, keep a diary.

You have wondered at my opinion, concerning the corruption of our nature, and the insufficiency of our righteousness. This may seem strange, this may appear shocking, to a mind unacquainted with itself. But, when you have searched your heart by this probe; when you have felt the pulse of your soul, by self-examination; then you will be better able to judge of my sentiment, and enter into the reasons of my faith.

By this means we shall also discover the sins that most easily beset us; which most frequently elude our vigilance, and baffle our resolution. We shall learn, how to post our guard; when to exercise the strictest watch; and where to direct the artillery of prayer. In a word, we shall learn, better than from ten thousand volumes, to know ourselves: a knowledge which was supposed, by the ancient philosophers, to descend from heaven;* and which, I believe, our christian divines will allow, has a happy tendency to lead people thither: because, of all other preparatives, it best disposes them for that blessed Redeemer, who is the way, the only way to those blissful mansions.

Now I have mentioned a way, let me suppose you travelling through an unknown country. You come to a place, where the road divides itself into two equally inviting parts. You are at a loss, which track to pursue. Whose direction will you choose to follow? that man's, who has passed through neither of them; that man's, who has passed through one of them only; or that man's, who has passed and repassed them both?—To wait for an answer, would be an affront to your judgment: Only let me observe, that the last is your Aspasio's case. He

The two friends, about to separate, agree upon an epistolary correspondence.

has travelled long, and proceeded far, even in your path. All that circumspection and assiduity, all that prayer and self-denial, all that fasting and alms, and every other means of grace, could do, in order to establish a righteousness of his own, has been done. But to no purpose. He has also trod every step in the way, which he recommends to his beloved friend. He has made the trial: can set his *probatum est*, to whatever he advises; and may very truly say, with his divine Master, "We speak that we do know,"* and testify that we have experienced.

Ther. I am sorry to observe, that the night is coming on, and our conversation almost at an end. My regret is increased by the consideration of your intended journey.—Though business obliges you to depart; it will, I hope, afford you leisure to write. This will be some compensation for the want of your company.

Yonder sun is sinking below the horizon, and just taking his leave of our earth. To retard the departing radiance, at least to alleviate the approaching loss, those western clouds catch the rays, and reflect them to our view in a most amusing diversity of colours. By this means, we enjoy the great luminary in his beams, even when his orb is withdrawn from our sight.—An epistolary correspondence has something of the same nature. Letters may be called the talk of absent friends. By this expedient, they communicate their thoughts, even though countries, kingdoms, or seas intercept their speech. You must, therefore, promise me this satisfaction; and let me converse with my Aspasio by the pen, when I can no longer have an intercourse with him in person.

Asp. You have anticipated me, Theron. Otherwise, what is now my promise, would have been my request.

* John iii. 11.

Beautiful effect of the setting sun.

I cannot but take notice of another particularity in that magnificent assemblage of clouds. How they varied their appearance, as the lamp of day changed its situation.—A little while ago, those curtains of the sky were streaked with orange, or tinged with amber. Presently, they borrowed the blush of the rose, or the softened red of the pink: Ere long, they glow with vermilion, or deepen into crimson. Soon succeeds the purple-tinctured robe of majesty; and as soon (thus transient is all sublunary grandeur!) gives place to the sable veil of evening, or the gloomy pall of night.—Such, I trust, will be the issue of my Theron's present apprehensions. All his splendid ideas of human excellency and self-righteousness will become faint; will lose their imaginary lustre; till, at length, they fade away, and darken into absolute self-abasement.—Then the Sun of Righteousness will be amiable, will be desirable, as the beauties of the dawn breaking in upon the shades of night.

THERON AND ASPASIO :

OR, A

SERIES OF LETTERS.



LETTER I.

ASPASIO TO THERON.

Dear Theron,

I AM now at the seat of my worthy friend Camillus ; where business and inclination will fix me for some weeks.—This evening we had a most pleasing ramble. I have met with nothing so agreeable, since I left your house, and lost your company.

The time was just arrived, and the scene was fully opened, which furnished our great poet with his fine description ;

Now was the sun in the western cadence low,
From noon ; and gentle airs, due at their hour,
To fan the earth now wak'd, and usher in
The ev'ning cool.

At this juncture, Camillus invited me to take the air.—We walked several times along a close shady alley, arched with the foliage of filberts.—Here, hid from every eye, and the whole world withdrawn from our view, we seemed like monks strolling in their cloisters.—Turning short at the end, we enter a parallel range of majestic and uniformly spreading walnut trees.—This transition was somewhat like advancing, through a low porch, into the isles of a magnificent cathedral. The broad leaf, and large trunk of those lordly trees ; their very diffusive spread, added to their prodigious height ; give them an air of uncom-

The mind delighted in the contemplation of majestic trees.

mon dignity. It swells the imagination with vast ideas, and entertains us with a romantic kind of delight, to expatiate amidst such huge columns, and under such superb elevations, of living architecture.

Quitting our cathedral, we turn once again, and pass into a grand colonnade of oaks; so regular in their situation, so similar in their size, and so remarkably correspondent in every circumstance, that they looked like twins of nature; not only belonging to the same family, but produced at the same birth. Through these lay a walk, straight, spacious, and gracefully long; far exceeding the last in the extent of its area, though much inferior in the stateliness of its ceiling. It put me in mind of that divine benignity, which has allowed us six days for the prosecution of our own comparatively low affairs; and set apart but one, for the more immediate attendance on the sublime exercise of devotion.

This walk was covered with the neatest gravel; and not a weed to be seen, not one spire of grass, through the whole extended surface. It stole into a continual ascent; yet so very gradually, that the rise was scarce discernible, either by the searching eye, the toiling feet, or the panting breath.—At the extremity a handsome summer-house shewed a flight of steps, and half a Venetian door. The rest of the building was hid by the clustering branches.

As soon as we enter the apartment, Camillus throws open the left hand sash; and, with it, a more enlarged and amusing prospect.—The structure appeared situate on the brow of a considerable eminence; whose sides were partly shagged and perplexed with thorny shrubs. The spectator is agreeably surprised, to find himself accommodated with so elegant a mansion, on the summit of so rude and ruinous a spot. But how greatly is his surprise and his satisfaction augmented, when he casts his eye forward, and beholds the beautiful meads, which, from the foot of this rugged hill, stretch themselves into a space almost unmeasurable.

Through the midst of this extensive vale, which was

Delightful prospect from a summer-house.

decked with the finest verdure, and replenished with the richest herbage, a river rolled its copious flood; rolled in a thousand serpentine meanders, as though it had lost its way in the flowery labyrinth, or made repeated efforts of flowing back to its source. Till, at last, having wandered more than twice the length of the meadows; having held a mirror to the aspiring poplars, and bending willows; having paid a welcome salute to several ornamented villas, and passed through the arches of two or three curiously pendent bridges; it seemed to meet the sky, and mingle with the horizon.

Opposite to the front window, a cascade fell from the adjacent stream. It flashed and foamed along the broad slope, indented with small pits, and jagged with protuberant stones. The current, vexed and embarrassed, seemed to rave at the intervening obstacles; and forcing its rapid, indignant, sonorous way, struck the ear with a peal of liquid thunder. These fretful waters,—let our angry passions observe the admonition, and follow the example,—soon were pacified; soon forgot to chide. Collected into a little rivulet, they ran off in calm and silent lapse, till they lost themselves amongst beds of osier and plantations of alder.

The river, widening as it flowed, was parted here and there by several little islands. Some tufted with reeds, and the resort of swans. Some adorned with stately porticoes, and splendid alcoves, the graceful retreats of rural pleasure. Some furnished with green embowering walks, fitted for studious retirement and sedate contemplation.—On either side of the charming valley, towns and villages lay thick and looked gay; adding ornament and variety to the scene, and receiving innumerable advantages from the passing wave.

The whole recalled to an attentive observer's mind, that amiable and august spectacle which the Syrian soothsayer* could not behold without a rapture of de-

* Numb. xxiii. 7.

Pleasing effect of contrast in rural scenery.

light: "From the top of the rocks I see the tribes of Jehovah, and from the hills I behold the habitations of his chosen people. How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob! and thy tabernacles, O Israel! As the valleys, are they spread forth; as gardens, by the river's side; as trees of exquisite fragrance,† which the Lord hath planted; as cedars of stateliest growth, flourishing beside the waters."

We had but just looked about us, when a messenger came for Camillus. As he was called to settle some private affairs, I chose to stay in this inviting retreat; and determined to make myself amends for the loss of Camillus's company, by beginning a correspondence with my Theron.—We have pen, ink, and paper, in all our rural retirements; that, if any thing is started in discourse, or occurs in meditation, worthy to be remembered, it may immediately be committed to writing.

I could not but observe to my friend, that, fine as the prospect appeared, there was one decoration wanting; if some grand deformity may be called a decoration. The ridges of a bleak and barren mountain, or the skirts of a sun-burnt tawny heath, would give additional liveliness to the ornamented parts of the landscape, and make their beauties strike with double vigour.—This also, by shewing us what wretched abodes and inhospitable quarters might have fallen to our share, would awaken in our hearts a more fervent gratitude to the supreme Disposer of things; who has cast our lot "in a fairer ground, and given us a more goodly heritage."

So, a proper knowledge of the divine law, of its sublime perfections, and rigorous sanction, joined with

* Numb. xxiv. 4, 6. It is well known, that the word אהלית is used in the sacred writings, to denote either a delightful perfume, Prov. vii. 17. or that aromatic plant which produces it, Cant. iv. 14.—For which reason, I think it very justifiable to render the expression, trees of exquisite fragrance; and am persuaded, it will be far more intelligible to the generality of readers than trees of lign-aloes.

A knowledge of God and Jesus Christ the consummation of human happiness.

a conviction of our own extreme deficiency and manifold transgressions;—all this would endear the blessed Jesus to our affections, and powerfully recommend his righteousness to our desires.—The remainder of this epistle, therefore, shall turn upon some instances of duty, enjoined in that sacred system. By which it may be highly useful to examine our conduct, and sift our hearts; in which, I believe, we have all fallen short, and are all become guilty; from which, we may learn the imperfection of our best services, and see the inexpressible need of a better righteousness than our own.

The knowledge of God is the foundation of all vital religion, and indeed is the consummation of human happiness. It is not only matter of present duty, but the very essence of our future bliss; “This is life eternal, to know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent.”* Yet, important and obligatory as it is, are we not very defective in this divine science? Have we duly acquainted ourselves with the marvellous excellences of the Lord Jehovah; his uncontrollable power, and all-comprehending wisdom; his unbounded goodness, and unwearied patience; his immaculate holiness, and inflexible justice; his never-failing faithfulness, and inviolate veracity?—Have we, according to the direction of our inspired tutor, pursued this sacred study on our knees; † and sought this most noble of all intellectual endowments, not merely from books, but principally at the throne of grace? Have we sought it, like that ancient Jewish student, with an early application, and with incessant assiduity; even “from the flower, till the grape was ripe?” ‡

Is that scanty ray of knowledge, which perhaps has forced itself through our original darkness, operative on our affections? “Have we loved the Lord our God with all our heart? This is the first and great commandment. §—Have we constantly entertained the most magnificent and honourable thoughts of his sub-

* John xvii. 3.

† Eccelus li. 15.

‡ James i. 5.

§ Matt. xxii. 38.

Necessity of a holy fervour in devotion.

lime perfection? Is our esteem for this immensely great and most blessed Being, high, superlative, matchless? somewhat like that expressed by the psalmist; "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire in comparison of thee."*—Have we been affectionately concerned for his glory, and zealous to advance his holy religion; troubled, very sensibly troubled, when our Maker's honour has been trampled in the dust, by licentious tongues or flagitious deeds?

Have we made it our ruling care, to approve the whole of our life, and the most secret transactions of our breast, to his all-seeing eye; resolved, deliberately resolved to sacrifice, not only our darling lusts, but even our most valuable interests, whenever they stand in competition with the good pleasure of his will?—In a word, as the hart panteth after the water-brooks, with such vehement and inextinguishable ardour have we thirsted after—a brighter manifestation of his divine attributes,—some sweeter assurance of his special love,—and an ever-increasing conformity to his holy image?

Such was the temper of those excellent men, who are characterised in the scriptures of truth, as the children of the Highest, and patterns for our imitation. This is their language: "The desire of our soul is unto thy name, and to the remembrance of thee. With my soul have I desired thee in the night; yea, with my spirit within me will I seek thee early."†—Neither is

* Psa. lxxiii. 25.

† Isa. xxvi. 8, 9. We can hardly tell which to admire most, the beauty of the description, or the piety of the persons. I have desired; and not with inactive wishes, but such as prompt to vigorous endeavours. I will seek thee; and early, with the most vigilant application and unwearied assiduity.—The emphasis is very much increased by the addition of those lively words, with my soul, yea, with my spirit; with the whole bent and sway of my affections, and with the steady invariable determination of my judgment.—Thus have I desired thee even in the night; when both the pursuits and the thoughts of other people are sunk and lost in profound repose. Thus will I seek thee, with a zeal, early as the rising, constant as the returning sun.

The benevolence of God conspicuous in all his works.

such warmth of love, and fervour of desire, any needless or extravagant pitch of devotion; but a reasonable service, indispensably due from all intelligent creatures to the great Author of their being; in whom all possible perfections, with the utmost exaltation and dignity, reside; from whom all manner of blessings, in the most copious and never-failing communications, flow.

When we receive, from an absent friend, rich and repeated presents; casks of generous wine, or jars of delicious fruit; we feel ourselves enkindled into a grateful affection. We honour, we love the person, who allows us such a distinguished place in his heart; and expresses his cordial regard by such a series of active and tender benevolence.—The blessed God is a friend to us all, infinitely powerful, and equally munificent: We are the constant objects of his more than friendly, of his parental cares. Every passing moment is a messenger of his patience, and charged with some token of his bounty. For our sake, he has diffused blessings over all the face of the earth; and commanded every element to concur in ministering to our accommodation. He has not only adapted our benefits to our several wants; but has given them a diversification, large as the scope of our wishes: and an enrichment, far beyond all that our fancy could conceive.—Profuse liberality! yet small and scanty, compared with his most adorable benignity in Christ Jesus.

What if God, willing to manifest the superabundant riches of his kindness, had made bare the arm of his omnipotence; and struck a most miraculous road through the surges of the ocean, to afford us a safe passage?—if, to accommodate us in our travels, he had brought waters out of the flinty rock; and bid the ravens bring meat to our hands, bid the winds convey manna to our doors?—if, to furnish us with a commodious settlement, he had dethroned mighty kings, dispossessed populous nations, and made the walls of impregnable cities fall to the ground?—if, to further the dispatch of our business, or facilitate the conquest

Insensibility to the love of God in giving his Son, is sufficient condemnation.

of our enemies, he had arrested the sun in his meridian career, and laid an embargo upon the moon, setting out on her nightly tour?—in short, if, to promote our welfare, he had suspended the powers, and controlled the laws of universal nature; had wrought all the miracles, exhibited in the land of Egypt, or recorded in the volumes of inspiration:—should we not think ourselves under the most inviolable engagements, to love the Lord our God, “who had done so great things for us;” to love him unfeignedly and ardently; to love him with a supreme affection, far above every other amiable object?—Yet we have greater, incomparably greater obligations to our almighty Benefactor. For (hear, O heavens! wonder, O earth! and let eternity dwell upon the stupendous truth) “God spared not his Son,—his own Son,—his transcendently glorious and divinely excellent Son,—but delivered him up to the deepest humiliation, and to the most accursed death, for us men and our salvation.

O, Theron! have we been impressed with wonder at the contemplation of this goodness? Have our hearts glowed with gratitude, under a sense of these mercies? Surely, no man need be convicted of any other crime, at the great tribunal, than insensibility of such love, and ingratitude for such favours. This, without the accession of horrid impieties, is enough to leave him absolutely inexcusable. This is enough to prove him one of the most disingenuous and detestable of creatures.

Have we exercised ourselves in frequent thanksgiving? Many are the exhortations to this honourable duty. “Praise thy God, O Zion:”* “praise him for his mighty acts:”† praise him according to his excellent greatness.”†—Innumerable are the incitements to

* Ps. cxlvii. 12.

† Ps. cl. 2.

† Among these exhortations, we may rank that beautiful and devout address to God, *ישׁב תחלות ישראל* Ps. xxii. 3. Thou that inhabitest—light inaccessible, shall I say? the regions of immensity, or the ages of eternity? No; but what is a more exalted character—the praises of Israel: finely signifying, that praise is a most acceptable sacrifice,

abound in this pleasant service. Every comfort has a voice, and cries in the ear of reason, "O! that men would therefore praise the Lord for his goodness." Every deliverance enforces the address, and furnishes fresh materials for the heavenly employ.—The man after God's own heart declares, as an inviting example for our practice, "I will bless the Lord at all times: his praise shall continually be in my mouth;* yea, as long as I have any being, I will sing praises unto my God."†—Indeed, when we consider the inexhaustibly rich bounty of God our Creator, and the inconceivably tender mercy of God our Redeemer, it is both strange and deplorable, that the love of God is not always prevailing in our hearts, and the language of praise ever flowing from our lips.

I will not suppose our character so irreligious, that we have neglected the daily worship of God, either in our closet, or in our family.—But have we prayed with that profound reverential awe, which is due to the High and Lofty One who inhabiteth eternity?—Have we made our supplications with that fervent importunity, which may in some measure correspond with the extreme indigence of our state, and the invaluable worth of the blessings we crave?—Have our petitions been attended with that steady affiance, which may glorify the goodness, the power, the veracity of the Lord? may evidently declare, that he is rich in mercy to all that call upon him;‡ that he "is the Lord Jehovah, in whom is everlasting strength;"§ "that he is the God of truth, and faithful for ever."|| We call him Father: but have we trusted in him, with that unsuspecting, cheerful, filial confidence, which a child reposes on the fidelity and indulgence of such an earthly

to which the divine Majesty attends with the greatest delight;—intimating also, that the exercise of praise should not be an occasional thing, like a transient visit to a stranger's house; but a daily and almost unintermitted service, like the stated residence of a person in his own habitation.

* Ps. xxxiv. 1. † Ps. cxlvi. 2. ‡ Rom. x. 12.

§ Is. xxvi. 4. || Deut. xxxii. 4.

Self-examination on several important duties;

relative? Have we not entertained, too often entertained, narrow, dishonourable, beggarly apprehensions, concerning the treasures of his liberality, and the bowels of his pity? rating them even lower than our parents', our friends', or our own.

Have we been careful to carry the spirit of our prayers into our ordinary conversation; and waited at the door, as well as approached to the throne of grace?—Amidst the intervals of our solemn devotions, have we cultivated an ejaculatory intercourse with heaven? How highly would the ambitious courtier prize, and how frequently would he use, a privy-key, which should give him, at all hours, free admittance to his sovereign. This key of admittance, only to an infinitely more exalted Potentate, we all possess in the practice of mental aspiration to God.—It is certainly the noblest employ, and will be the richest improvement of our thoughts, to send them in such short embassies to the King of kings; and to derive, by such occasional sallies of faith,* a renewed supply from the

* We have, in scripture, very remarkable instances of the success which has attended ejaculatory prayer.—Observe Nehemiah: he stands before Ahasuerus, apprehensive of the monarch's displeasure, yet desirous to solicit him in behalf of Jerusalem. To be delivered from his fears, and to obtain his desires, what method does he use? The mean and servile arts of flattery? No; but the manly and devout expedient of prayer. I prayed, says the patriot, to the God of heaven. We cannot suppose, that he fell on his knees, or spoke with his lips, while he continued in the royal presence. But he darted up his soul in silent supplication: which supplication "pierced the clouds," reached the eternal throne, and returned not again till a blessing was sent; such as totally averted the wrath he dreaded, and procured favour and assistance, much larger than he expected. Neh. ii. 4.

When David heard that Ahithophel, the ablest politician in his kingdom, was revolted to Absalom; sensible what a loss his affairs had sustained, and what an advantage the rebellious party had acquired, he betook himself to his God. He staid not for an opportunity of retirement, but instantly and upon the spot cried, "O Lord, I pray thee turn the counsel of Ahithophel into foolishness!"—A short address, but very efficacious. He, who disappointeth the devices of the crafty, sent a spirit of infatuation among the rebels, and inclined them to reject the advice of that judicious statesman. Which false step brought upon their horrid enterprise the ruin it deserved; and chagrined the

designed to promote conviction of sin.

fountain of all good. How great a loss then must it be to our spiritual interests, and how contemptuous a disregard of the ever-present Jehovah, to omit entirely, or long to discontinue, this most beneficial practice of habitual adoration?—Can you, my dear Theron, acquit yourself on this article of inquiry? Has not every day of your life been a day of negligence in this respect; been a perpetual disobedience to our Saviour's injunction, "Men ought in this manner, always to pray, and not to faint?"*

Have we sanctified the Sabbath? Has the Lord's day, with all its solemn and sacred offices, been our delight?—Have we remembered that distinguished portion of our time, as Jacob remembered the delightful interview at Peniel? Have we expected it, as merchants expect the arrival of a richly laden vessel? Have we improved it, as husbandmen improve the shining hours of the harvest? Have we wholly laid aside every earthly engagement; "not speaking our own words,"† nor allowing ourselves in any gratifications, that may interrupt our communion with the Father of spirits? "Has one day in his courts been preferable to a thousand,"‡ spent either in the works of

wretched traitor, even to rage, frenzy, and suicide, 2 Sam. xv. 31. xvii. 23.

Amyntor, at a memorable period of his life, was under great distress of conscience, and harassed by violent temptations. He made his case known to an experienced friend; who said, Amyntor, you do not pray. Surprised at this, he replied, "I pray, if such a thing be possible, too much. I can hardly tell, how many times in the day I bow my knee before God; almost to the omission of my other duties, and the neglect of my necessary studies?"—"You mistake my meaning, dear Amyntor. I do not refer you to the ceremony of the knee, but to the devotion of the heart; which neglects not any business, but intermingles prayer with all; which in every place looks unto the Lord; and, on every occasion, lifts up an indigent longing soul for the supply of his grace. This, (added he, and spoke with a peculiar vehemence,) this is the prayer which all the devils in hell cannot withstand."—This, I would further observe, is the prayer which brings down somewhat of heaven into the heart; in which I would myself desire to abound, and would earnestly recommend to all my acquaintance, and all my readers.

* Luke xviii. 1. † Is. lviii. 13. ‡ Ps. lxxxiv. 10.

our calling, or in the scenes of recreation?—Have the memorials of our Redeemer's dying merits, and the seals of his unchangeable loving kindness, been relished as a feast, and prized as a portion?

Have we honoured God's holy word?—What greater mark of disesteem, than to despise a person's discourse, and not to think his speech worthy of our notice? especially when he addresses us with very great seriousness, and with the utmost affection. In our Bible, the God of glory speaks to his creatures; speaks with the most persuasive energy, and with all the yearnings of parental tenderness. Have we listened to our Creator with reverence and delight; and rejoiced with trembling at—"Thus saith the Lord?"

Have we searched the oracles of truth, not merely as scholars, but as sinners? not from a spirit of curiosity, or with an air of formality, but with a solicitude and ardour becoming persons who inquire after the Saviour of their lost souls? Have we submitted our inmost thoughts to their impartial scrutiny; to receive conviction of sin from their awful remonstrances, and to hear the sentence of condemnation at their righteous bar?—Have you been willing to suffer the reproach of conscious baseness, while they have ripped up the disguises of falsehood; laid open our secret iniquities; and brought all our evil ways to remembrance? Thus Josiah acted. "His heart was tender, and he humbled himself before the Lord; he rent his clothes, and went before the Lord, when he heard the words of the book of the law."*

Have we hid the glad tidings of the gospel within our memories, within our hearts? Have we been diligent to suck this "honeycomb"† of grace by concomitant meditation, and subsequent prayer?—Have we valued the precious promises, as gentlemen of wealth value the writings of their private estates; or as enfranchised bodies esteem the charter of their public privileges?—Have we, like the princely patriarch,

* 2 Chron. xxxiv. 27.

† Cant. v. 1.

designed to promote conviction of sin.

longed for those words of edification, exhortation, and comfort, more than for our necessary food?* and, like the royal prophet, prevented the night watches, that we might be occupied in those statutes and ordinances of heaven?†

We have hitherto confined the examination to a few instances of the affirmative kind; how dreadfully will the dark account be swelled, if, instead of love and obedience, there be hatred and opposition?—Hatred of the name, glory, and worship!—opposition to his interest, kingdom and service!

God is infinite perfection; worthy of all admiration; exalted above all praise. Yet do not our thoughts more frequently, or more naturally, turn upon our own accomplishments, than upon the adorable and shining attributes of the Almighty. This is, in itself, the most shameful dotage; and, in God's sight, the most abominable idolatry. Yet let us observe what passes within, and we shall probably find, that as damps arise in the mines, or fogs in the fenny grounds, so naturally and so copiously do these over-weening reflections arise in our depraved minds.

God is an everlasting King. Have we not too often resisted his authority? Have we not, as far as in us lay, deposed the omnipotent Sovereign, and exalted self into the throne; made self-will our law, and self-pleasing our end: thus adding sacrilege to rebellion?

God is transcendently gracious and amiable. Have we not turned our backs upon him, by forgetting his mercies? Nay, have we not spurned him from our affections, by being “lovers of pleasure, more than lovers of God!”‡—Awake, conscience, bear thy impartial testimony; and I am persuaded, the pharisee in our breasts, like the man unfurnished with the wedding-garment, must be struck dumb; must be covered with confusion.

Are our hearts warm with brotherly love?—Good

* Job xxii. 12.

† Psa. cxix. 148.

‡ 2 Tim. iii. 4.

Self-examination on several important duties ;

manners will put expressions of civility into our mouths ; but has a power from on high implanted the royal law of charity in our breasts ? The character of a gentleman requires a deportment accessible, obliging, and courteous : has the spirit of christianity taught us to love, not in word or plausible appearance only, “ but in deed and in truth !*—Do we love our neighbours, not merely on account of some relation they bear us, or some services they have done us ; but because they are creatures of the blessed God, are the objects of his providential care, and capable at least of being conformed to his image ? Do we love them, because we hope that the Lord Jesus Christ has bought them with his blood ; is willing to make them partakers of his Spirit, and members of his mystical body ?

Are we sincerely concerned for their present welfare, and their eternal happiness ? Do we embrace all opportunities of promoting both the one and the other ; embrace them with the same alacrity, and improve them with the same zeal, which actuate us in seeking our own felicity ?—If they exceed us in all that is amiable, and all that is prosperous, do we contemplate their superior excellence with a real complacency, and their more abundant success with a real satisfaction ?

Do we dislike to hear, and abhor to spread, defamatory tales ; even when our adversaries are the men whom they tend to blacken ?—When rudely affronted, or causelessly abused, do we pity the offenders for the wrong done to their own souls ; rather than kindle into resentment at the indignity offered to ourselves ?—When greatly injured, are we slow to anger, and not easily provoked ? Are we much more willing to be reconciled, than to foment displeasure, and prosecute revenge ? In a word, do we “ love our enemies ; bless them that curse us ; do good to them that hate us ; and pray for them which despitefully use us,

* 1 John iii. 18.

designed to promote conviction of sin.

and persecute us?"*—Without this loving and lovely disposition, we abide, says the apostle, in death; † are destitute of spiritual, and have no title to eternal life.

Let me add, are all our graces, and all our works, clothed with humility? This should be the dress, in which they severally appear; as well as the bond of connexion, which unites them all. ‡—Do we maintain a very low opinion of our own accomplishments, and “in honour prefer others to ourselves?” § habitually sensible, that we are less than the least of the divine mercies, and the very chiefest of sinners?

I might easily have branched out the preceding subjects into a much greater variety of interrogatory articles. But I intend only to present you with a specimen. Your own meditations will enlarge the sketch, and supply what is defective. Only let me beg of you, my dear friend, to try your state by this touchstone; to prove your conduct by this standard. And may the Father of lights give you an understanding, to discern the exact purity and sublime perfection of his holy law!

Have you lived in the uninterrupted observance of all these duties; avoiding whatever is forbidden, and obeying whatever is commanded? Your outward behaviour, I know, has been free from notorious violations; but has your inward temper been preserved from all ungodly motions, and from every irregular desire? Is there no enmity in your heart to any of the precepts; nor any backwardness, nor any failure, in performing each and every injunction?

* Matt. v. 44. “What manner of love is this?” How disinterested! how extensive! how triumphant! Must not all the boasted benevolence of the philosopher and moralist, strike sail to this evangelical charity? Must not both moralist and philosopher acknowledge the necessity of a divine operation, thus to enlarge, exalt, and refine their social affections?

† John iii. 14.

‡ 1 Pet. v. 5. The unusual word *εσκομβρωσασθε* is supposed to have both these significations.

§ Rom. xii. 10.

The divine law, though strict, has no terrors for the true believer.

When you put these questions to yourself, remember, that if you fail in one point, or in any degree, you are guilty of all.* If your conformity be not persevering as well as perfect, you incur the penalty, and are abandoned to the curse. You stand charged, before the Judge of the world, with all the guilt of all your sins, both original and actual: and there is not one circumstance, nor one aggravation, of any of your iniquities, overlooked or forgotten,—unless, renouncing all your personal performances, you place your whole affiance on a Saviour's atonement, and a Saviour's righteousness. I think you will not dare to put the issue of your everlasting state upon the former footing; which is not only hazardous, but must be inevitably ruinous.—You will infinitely rather choose to acknowledge yourself a poor insolvent; and plead the unsearchable riches of your Redeemer's obedience.

To those who believe, the law, though strict, is not terrible. Because, be its precepts of holiness ever so extensive, they have been most completely fulfilled by their glorious Surety. Be its penal sanctions ever so rigorous, they have been satisfied to the utmost by their great Mediator.—Believers, therefore, may make their boast of their adorable Sponsor. They may “sit under his shadow with great delight.”† While the thunderings of mount Sinai, and all the terrors of the legal dispensation, tend only to increase and quicken the refreshing sense of their safety. Just as the possessor of a plentiful estate, in some peaceful and prosperous country, reposes himself under the shade of his vine, or the shelter of his fig-tree; and, hearing of the wars which embroil, or the plagues which depopulate other nations, tastes, with augmented relish, his own felicity.

Let me close with the affectionate and emphatical wish of an inspired epistolary writer; “That the Lord of peace may give my dear Theron peace—always, by all means!”‡ Then I shall think my wishes are

* Jam. ii. 10. Gal. iii. 10. † Cant. ii. ‡ 2 Thess. iii. 16.

Summary of the preceding letter.

accomplishing, and this blessing is at the door, when he sees the purity of the divine law,—sees the depravity of his own nature,—and the impossibility of being justified, without an interest in the great Mediator's righteousness: That righteousness, which, as it is the only hope, and the constant joy, is therefore the darling theme of

Your ever faithful

ASPASIO.

P. S. Shall I abridge the preceding letter, and contract the whole into these two great commandments, which made the first awakening impressions on my own mind? "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart: Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself."—Amazing! said your Aspasio. Are these the commands of God; as obligatory as the prohibition of adultery, or the observation of the Sabbath? Then has my whole life been a continual act of disobedience. Not a day, no, not an hour, in which I have performed my duty.—This conviction struck me, as the hand-writing upon the wall struck the presumptuous monarch.—It pursued me, as Saul pursued the christians, not only to my own house, but even to distant cities;—nor ever gave up the great controversy, till, under the influence of the Spirit, it brought me "weary and heavy laden" to Jesus Christ.

LETTER II.

THERON TO ASPASIO.

Dear Aspasio,

MORE than three weeks are elapsed, since you favoured me with your improving company. During which interval, I have frequently recollected the most

Theron, convinced of the iniquity of his heart and life,

material parts of our late discourses. I have carefully considered, both the doctrines you advanced, and the answers you returned to my several objections—I have often reviewed your valuable letter: have used it as a touch-stone, to examine my state; and have, with great punctuality, observed your parting advice.—I have sat every evening, for a picture of my mind; and have endeavoured to take a true unflattering draught of all its distinguishing qualities. And if the diary is a faithful mirror, if it does not aggravate the deformity of my features, I shall be absolutely out of conceit with myself: I shall ever entertain the meanest opinion of my own, either moral or religious qualifications.

Where is that intense and supreme love of God, which his transcendent perfections challenge, and his ineffable goodness claims?—Where that firm and joyful reliance on Christ Jesus, in any degree proportioned to his infinite merits and inviolable promises?—Where that cordial and tender affection for my fellow-christians, which is due to the servants of a divine Redeemer; the people, whom he ransomed by his agonies, and purchased with his very blood? Where is the incense of holy contemplation and refined desire? where the flame of fervent devotion and ever-active zeal? such as become the living temple of God, in which his most immaculate and glorious Spirit vouchsafes to reside?—These fundamental graces, like the grand organs in the animal system, should impart health to the soul, and spread the beauty of holiness through all the conversation. But these, alas! far from beating with a vigorous and uniform pulse, hardly heave with life; only just struggle, now and then, with some faint, intermitted, uneven throws.

How seldom do my actions spring from gratitude to the everlasting Benefactor, or aim at the glory of his superexcellent Majesty?—In addressing the King immortal, invisible, how languid are my affections, and wandering is my attention? how great my un-

sees the necessity of a better righteousness than his own.

belief, and how little my reverential awe?—I receive innumerable mercies; but where are my returns of correspondent thankfulness? I am visited with many gracious chastisements; but without proper resignation, or due improvement.—Alas! for my heartless devotions, my lifeless virtue, and the multitude of my refined iniquities!—Hid behind the mask of outward decency, and some customary forms of religion, I was altogether unacquainted with my spiritual state. I fancied myself “rich and increased with goods, and to have need of nothing: even while I was wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked.”*

If I look back, and review the years of youth and manhood; what has been the tenor, what is the aspect of my life? More like a desolate and horrid wilderness, than a cultivated garden, or a fruitful vineyard.—In youth, what sordid gratifications of appetite! In manhood, what base compliance with a wicked world! In both, what shoals of evil inclinations have polluted my heart; what swarms of vain imaginations have debased my thoughts; what frothy and unprofitable words have dropt from my lips!—By all which, how have I disobeyed, and how dishonoured God! how have I denied, and how crucified the Lord Jesus Christ!—and yet supposed myself, all the while, to be good enough!

It is something unaccountable, that a person of my inquisitive disposition should, through the course of so many years, be an utter stranger to himself. I wonder at my own preposterous folly!—To travel into foreign countries, and visit the most renowned cities of Europe; yet never step over the threshold, nor look within the apartments of my own breast!—To carry on a correspondence with my friends, even in the remotest nations; and never enter upon a conference, nor hold any intelligence with my own heart!—To inquire after news from the fleet, news from the army, news from the court; yet exercise neither cu-

* Rev. iv. 7.

Theron, convinced of the iniquity of his heart and life,

riosity nor care, with regard to the hope of heaven, and the concerns of eternity!—What egregious misconduct is this! A most pernicious error in the economy of religious life.

Sometimes I have cast a transient glance on my outward behaviour; but never extended my search to the delinquent, the traitor, the rebel within.—And even my outward behaviour has been surveyed, with as much erroneous partiality, as superficial levity. It has been compared, not with that exact and sublime standard, the scriptures of truth: but, as in the case of the self-deceiving pharisee, with the unjust, extortionate, and adulterous practices of some other people. From whence I most unwarrantably concluded, that, being not quite so abandoned as the most profligate creatures, my character must be good, and my condition safe.—But thanks to your last friendly letter, and the searching expedient it recommended, I am now in a different way of thinking.

It is strange to recollect, and indeed it is shameful to confess, the many artifices which I have used to put a cheat upon myself.—Sometimes I have fancied, that the divine law could never be so strict, as to condemn us inexorably, if we continue not in all its precepts.—Sometimes I have pleaded the infirmity of our nature, and endeavoured to make the works of darkness appear only as pitiable failings.—Sometimes I have taken refuge in the excellency of our church, and plumed myself with the borrowed feathers of a religious profession.—At other times, I have soothed my conscience to rest, by a punctuality of attendance on places, or a zealous attachment to forms. And all this, to seduce, cajole, and betray myself:—betray myself, first into a vain conceit of my own endowments; then into a contemptuous disregard of Christ; and at last into eternal destruction.—But now I see my guilt, I apprehend my danger, and feel my helpless condition.

Indeed, my Aspasio, I am now convinced, that the

sees the necessity of a better righteousness than his own.

darkest colours cannot be too dark for the portrait of my spiritual state. I see myself overspread with an habitual depravity, and cannot forbear crying out, with the abashed leper, Unclean! unclean!*—The sacred oracles in no wise misrepresent fallen man, when they describe him as altogether become abominable.† They are far from under-rating human works, when they denominate them filthy rags.‡ Rags they are, if we

* Lev. xiii. 45.

† Job xv. 16.

‡ Isa. lxiv. 6. Does not Theron misapply this text? Can it be intended to discredit the qualifications of the upright? Is it not rather a brand set upon the works of the wicked; whose "very sacrifices are an abomination to the Lord?" Or a rebuke given to the specious performances of the hypocrite; who is precise in the form, but destitute of the power of godliness? Or, may it not refer to ritual observances; in contradistinction to moral duties, and spiritual accomplishments?

The disparaging character must not, I think, be confined to ritual observances; because it is expressly said, all our righteousnesses, including every kind of religious duty.—Neither can it be appropriated to the formal hypocrite, much less to the notoriously wicked; because those very persons, who are the subject of this assertion, declare in the context, "Lord, we are thy people; thou art our Father; we shall be saved." So that it seems intended to stain the pride of all human glory.

Besides, the prophet speaks of himself, "We all are as an unclean thing:" which, however strange and unreasonable it may seem, is the very same charge to which he pleads guilty in another place; "Woe is me! I am undone! for I am a man of unclean lips!" Not that he was defiled with any gross pollution; nay, he was a saint of the most distinguished lustre; but his eyes had seen the King, the Lord of hosts. He was under the clear manifestations of a God, glorious in holiness, inflexible in justice, and infinite in all perfections.—Amidst these manifestations, the impurity of his heart and nature were not only apparent, but glaring; overwhelmed him with abasement, and, till Christ was applied in a type (Isa. vi. 7.) filled him with terror.

In such circumstances, and under such views, all our moral virtues and evangelical graces, all our exercises of devotion and acts of charity, will appear both defective and polluted; by no means proportioned to the demands of the law, nor sufficient for our recommendation to the supreme Lawgiver;—no more than a few tattered rags can claim the character, or perform the services, of a complete suit;—no more than a few filthy rags are fit to dress the bride for her nuptials, or the courtier for a birth-night.

But there is a righteousness—blessed be divine grace!—spotlessly pure and consummately excellent; a righteousness, which answers all

Theron, convinced of the necessity of a better righteousness than his own,

consider their great imperfections; filthy rags, if we advert to their manifold defilements.—And since the nature of God is so irreconcilably averse to all contamination; since the law of God requires such unspotted perfection; “O who can stand before this holy Lord God,”* in any accomplishments of their own?

When I farther reflect, that I have only a very obscure glimpse of the divine purity, and am a mere novice in the knowledge of my own heart; how am I amazed at the lofty apprehensions which I once formed, concerning the dignity of my nature, and the integrity of my conduct! All owing to ignorance, the grossest ignorance of myself and the scriptures. How do I shudder to think, that, in expecting justification from the law, I was resting the welfare of my immortal soul, not on the foundation of a rock, but on the point of a dagger. I was going to the decisive tribunal, flushed with the falsest hopes, and charged with a set of glittering sins; going, like poor deluded Uriah,† not with any valid credentials, but with “the ministration of death”‡ in my hand.

Though I cannot but acknowledge the arrogance of these pretensions, yet loth, very loth is my pride, to renounce the pleasing absurdity. Self-love has searched, and searched again, for something excellent. It would fain make a better appearance, and can hardly brook the humiliation of imploring all *sub forma pauperis*.§ With what reluctance is a sinner brought to confess himself sinful in every duty, sinful in every capacity! Strange perverseness!—But the charge is undeniable. However unwilling, I must plead guilty. “Thou art weighed in the balances, and found wanting,”|| is evidently

that the Creator requires, and supplies all that the creature needs: to prove this momentous point, and to display this unspeakable gift, is the design of the following sheets.

* 1 Sam. vi. 20. † 2 Sam. xi. 14, 15. ‡ 2 Cor. iii. 9.

§ That is, under the character of a poor destitute, or as a beggar sues for his alms.

|| Dan. v. 27.

desires farther explanation and proof of the doctrine.

written on all I am, all I have, all I do.—And if I am thus defective, even in my own estimation; if I am utterly condemned, at the bar of my own conscience; “what then shall I do, when God riseth up? and when he visiteth, what shall I answer him?”*

I now see the necessity of an imputed righteousness. Without some such object of my trust, I am undone. I long therefore to hear your arguments in its behalf. And I must declare to you, if it can be satisfactorily proved from the scriptures, it is the most comfortable doctrine in the world, and worthy of all acceptance.

A letter upon this subject would be a singular favour, and, I hope, an equal blessing to

Your obliged and affectionate

THERON.

LETTER III.

ASPASIO TO THERON.

Dear Theron,

THOUGH all your letters give me pleasure, none was ever so highly pleasing as your last. I look upon it with the same secret joy, as a compassionate physician observes some very favourable symptoms, in the crisis of a beloved patient's distemper.

What you ask, I shall, without any further preface, attempt to execute. If my attempt proves satisfactory to your judgment, I am sure it will be the most likely means of healing your conscience, and calming your fears.—When we perceive the odious depravity of our nature; when we discern the horrible iniquity of our

* Job. xxvi. 14.

Aspasio proves the point from the liturgy.

lives; and are sensible of that tremendous wrath, and everlasting vengeance, which are due to such guilty creatures; then nothing can be found, that will speak effectual peace, nothing that will administer solid comfort, but only the vicarious sufferings and imputed righteousness of Jesus Christ.

To this purpose speaks one of the wisest and best of spiritual guides; "Has sin abounded?" as undoubtedly it has, in our heart, and our life; "grace has much more abounded," in the obedience and merits of our Redeemer.—Nay, "has sin reigned?" exerted its malignant power, in the most extensive and most destructive manner; rendering us subject unto death, both temporal and eternal? "Even so has grace reigned;" exerted its benign efficacy, and in a manner yet more triumphant; not only rescuing us from guilt and ruin, but restoring us to everlasting life and glory; and all this through the righteousness, the complete meritorious righteousness, brought in "by Jesus Christ our Lord."*

You inquire after the proof of this imputed righteousness. From a multitude I shall select a few; sufficient, I hope, to make it appear,—that this is the declared doctrine of our church, and the avowed belief of her most eminent divines;—that this is copiously revealed through the whole scriptures; revealed in many express passages, and deducible from a variety of instructive similitudes.

Hear the language of our common prayer, in a very affecting and solemn address to the Almighty; "We do not presume to come to this thy table, O merciful Lord, trusting in our own righteousness."—If we may not, if we dare not, rely on our own righteousness, when we approach the eucharistic table; much less may we depend upon it, when we are summoned to the decisive tribunal.—Should you ask, on what we are to depend? The exhortation to the communion furnishes an answer; "On the meritorious death and

* Rom. v. 21.

passion of Christ, whereby alone we obtain remission of sins, and are made partakers of the kingdom of heaven."

The collect appointed for the festival of circumcision, has this remarkable introduction; "Almighty God, whose blessed Son was obedient to the law for man." In what sense, or with what propriety, can this be affirmed, unless Christ's perfect obedience be referable to us, and accepted instead of ours? On any other interpretation, I should think, he was obedient, not for man, but for himself.

Should the artful critic give some other turn to these passages, it will avail him but little. Because the church, her own best expositor, has explained the meaning of such phrases, and put the matter beyond all doubt. In her eleventh article she says, "We are accounted righteous before God only for the merits of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." The doctrine relating to pardon of sin, had been stated in a preceding article. This displays the method, whereby sinners may appear righteous in the eye of God, and in the court of heaven; so as to recover the divine favour, and obtain a title to eternal bliss.—This is done, not by any native righteousness, not by any acquired righteousness, but by an imputed righteousness. Were we justified by either of the former methods, it would not have been said, we are accounted, but we are righteous. They are so far from constituting our reconciling and justifying righteousness, that they have no share in it; contribute nothing towards it; are totally excluded from it. We are accounted righteous, and accepted as such, only (mark the expression) *only* through the meritorious obedience and propitiating blood of our great Mediator.

The homilies are, if it be possible, still more explicit, and more cogent. In the homily concerning the salvation of mankind, we read the following words:—The apostle toucheth three things, which must go together in our justification. On God's part,

The homilies support the doctrine of imputed righteousness.

his great mercy and grace. On Christ's part, the satisfaction of God's justice, or the price of our redemption, by the offering of his body, and shedding of his blood, with fulfilling of the law perfectly. On our part, true and lively faith in the merits of Jesus Christ, which yet is not our's, but by God's working in us."—You see, according to the judgment of our venerable reformers, not only the offering of Christ's body, and shedding of Christ's blood, but also his perfect fulfilling of the law, are the adequate price of our redemption. All these act conjointly, they sweetly harmonize, in the great and glorious work. To suppose their disunion, is a doctrinal mistake, somewhat like that practical error of the papists, in severing the sacramental wine from the sacramental bread; administering to the laity the symbols of the slaughtered body, but withholding the symbols of the streaming blood.

There are other clauses in the same homily, which set the seal of the church to our sentiments. I shall content myself with transcribing one from the conclusion.—"Christ," says that form of sound words, "is the righteousness of all them that do truly believe. He for them paid their ransom by his death. He for them fulfilled the law in his life. So that now, in him, and by him, every true christian man may be called a fulfiller of the law; forasmuch as that which their infirmity lacketh, Christ's righteousness hath supplied."—This authority is as clear, as the doctrine authorized is comfortable. May the former sway our judgments! may the latter cheer our hearts!

The homily on Christ's nativity informs the reader, that the design of our Lord's incarnation was,—“to give light unto the world, and call sinners to repentance; to fulfil the law for us, and become the propitiation for our sins; to cast out the prince of the world, and destroy the works of the devil.”—We have all broke the law, we are all unable to keep the law; therefore the blessed Jesus fulfilled the law,—fulfilled

it, in each and every of its demands,—fulfilled it, in the highest degree of perfection,—and, what is of all considerations the most delightful, fulfilled it for us. His obedience took the place of what we were obliged to perform, under the covenant of works; and is not only the meritorious, but also the constituent cause of our justification.

So that, if there be any worthiness in our Lord's most holy nature; any merit in his exercise of the sublimest virtues; completed by his submission to the most ignominious sufferings, and tormenting death;—then, according to this standard system of orthodox divinity, these are the ground, these are the substance of the sinner's justification. And, according to the dictates of the most unbiassed reason, they are the best and surest ground, that can either be wished or imagined.

Does it not, from the preceding quotations, appear, that the doctrine of justification through the imputed righteousness of our Redeemer, is far from being disclaimed by the established church?—I am sorry, but constrained to own, that we rarely find any considerable strictures of this great evangelical peculiarity, in our modern theological discourses. Yet there have been preachers of the highest repute for learning, for judgment, and for piety, who professedly maintained this grand truth of the gospel.

The devout Bishop Beveridge, in his *Private Thoughts*, has left upon record the following very remarkable acknowledgment; which, if it suited his eminent holiness, cannot be too humbling, my dear Theron, for your lips and for mine. “I do not remember, neither do I believe, that I ever prayed, in all my life-time, with that reverence, or heard with that attention, or received the sacrament with that faith, or did any work with that pure heart and single eye, as I ought to have done. Insomuch, that I look upon all my righteousness but as filthy rags; and it is in the robes only of the righteousness of the Son of God, that I dare appear before the Majesty of heaven.”

Bishops Hopkins, Reynolds, Davenant,

The fervent and affectionate Bishop Hopkins* speaks in perfect consonance with his brother of St. Asaph.—“The law was given us, not that we should seek justification by the observance of it, but finding it impossible to be justified by fulfilling it, we should thereby be driven to Christ’s righteousness; who hath both fulfilled it in himself, and satisfied for our transgressing of it; and therefore saith the apostle, The law was a schoolmaster, to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. To this end it was promulgated, that seeing the strictness of its precepts, the rigour of its threatenings, and withal being convinced of our impotence to fulfil its commands, we might be urged by its terrors to fly to Christ, and find that righteousness in him which may answer all the demands of the law.”

Bishop Reynolds,† styled by his contemporaries, and not without reason, a walking library, bears his testimony in the following words;—“Christ as our Surety paid our debt, underwent the curse due to our sins, and bare them all in his own body on the tree; became subject to the law for us, and representatively in our stead fulfilled all the righteousness the law required, active and passive. For sin being once committed, there must be a double act to justification; the suffering of the curse, and the fulfilling of righteousness anew. The one, a satisfaction for the injury we have done to God, as our Judge; the other, the performance of a service which we owe unto him as our Maker.”

To this illustrious triumvirate, let me join Bishop Davenant; who, for his great abilities, and unquestionable integrity, was appointed one of our religious plenipotentiaries, at the renowned synod of Dort. In

* See his sermon on John vii. 10.

† See his treatise, entitled the Life of Christ. Which as well as all his other works, abound with striking sentiments, having much elegance of diction, a copious variety of learning, and a lively animating spirit of evangelical piety.

and Hooker, are its advocates.

his very valuable exposition of the epistle to the Colossians, he writes to this effect: "Ye are complete in Christ.—Ye are furnished, in that all-sufficient Redeemer, with whatever is requisite to everlasting salvation. With wisdom; since it is the consummation of this noble endowment, to know Christ and him crucified. With righteousness; because he has perfectly satisfied the law,* and thoroughly expiated our guilt. With sanctification; because his Spirit, dwelling in our hearts, mortifies our corrupt affections, and renews the soul after the image of its Creator."

Let me bring up the rear with a testimony, which, for clearness, solidity, and a full representation of the evangelical doctrine, might very justly have claimed a place in the van. It is taken from an author, whom the general consent of our nation has distinguished with the title of judicious. The judicious Hooker, in a treatise on justification, says,—“It is a childish cavil our adversaries so greatly please themselves with, exclaiming, that we tread all christian virtues under our feet, because we teach, that faith alone justifieth. Whereas, by this speech, we never meant to exclude either hope or charity from being always joined as inseparable mates with faith, in the man that is justified; or works from being added, as necessary duties, required of every justified man: but to shew,

* In this respect principally (says our author, enlarging upon the text) are believers complete: because, though destitute of any righteousness that may properly be called their own, Christ has graciously enriched them with his. Vide Davenant in Epist. ad Coloss. cap. ii. com. 10.

Let me beg leave to intimate that this exposition of the epistle to the Colossians,—for perspicuity of style, and accuracy of method,—for judgment in discerning, and fidelity in representing, the apostle's meaning,—for strength of argument in refuting errors, and felicity of invention in deducing practical doctrine, tending both to the establishment of faith, and the cultivation of holiness—is, I think, inferior to no writing of the kind; and richly deserves to be read, to be studied, to be imitated, by our young divines.

Bishop Sanderson's testimony :

that faith is the only hand, which putteth on Christ to justification ; and Christ the only garment, which being so put on, covereth the shame of our defiled natures, hideth the imperfection of our works, and preserveth us blameless in the sight of God : before whom, otherwise, the weakness of our faith were cause sufficient to make us culpable, yea, to shut us out of the kingdom of heaven, where nothing that is not absolute can enter."

You will allow the sagacious Bishop Sanderson* to sum up the evidence ; or rather, to make an important remark on the whole of the controversy. That great light of the church, both in casuistical and practical divinity, observes,—“ The tidings of a Redeemer must be blessed and welcome news, to those that are sensible of their own poverty, and take it of grace.” Our eagle-eyed divine penetrates into the true cause of the prevailing averseness to this evangelical doctrine. It is founded on the state of the heart, more than upon any force of argument. People are but little, if at all, sensible of their moral indigence ; of the defects which depreciate, and the defilements which sully, whatever they have, and whatever they do. Nay, strongly tinctured with pride, they would be themselves the Alpha, and suffer the blessed Jesus to be no more than the Omega, in procuring their eternal salvation. Therefore they can hardly be reconciled to the humbling character of an eleemosynary ; one who lives, wholly upon the alms of the gospel, and is dependent upon grace for his all.

Whereas, was this grand obstacle once removed ; were men convinced of sin, of exceeding sinfulness in their worst estate, and of remaining sinfulness in their best : they would soon be convinced of righteousness, † of the absolute necessity and inestimable worth of a Redeemer's righteousness. They would no longer dis-

* See his sermon upon Isa. lii. 3.

† John xvi. 8.

Also that of Clemens, among the ancient fathers.

pute against it, but cordially receive it; entirely rely on it; and adore the goodness, the transcendent, and unutterable goodness of God, in providing it.

I think in one of our conferences, I undertook to produce my vouchers from the ancient fathers. Let me now subjoin two or three attestations of this kind.—From one of which you will perceive, that those early writers had a considerable degree of clearness upon the point. From the other you will see, that, far from rejecting the doctrine, they embrace it with delight and rapture. And if you will admit of the last, you cannot be startled at any thing, which I shall advance upon the subject.—Let me only premise in general, that, if those authors are not copious and explicit, with regard to the imputation of active righteousness, they abound in passages, which evince the substitution of Christ in our stead: passages, which disclaim all dependence on any duties of our own, and fix the hopes of a believer entirely upon the merits of his Saviour. When this is the case, I am very little solicitous about any particular forms of expression; and far from being angry, even though the words, which I think most significant, are not retained.

Clemens—an intimate acquaintance of St. Paul's, and whose name was in the book of life,*—in his truly excellent epistle to the Corinthians, assures that people:† “We are not,” in any respect or in any degree, “justified by ourselves,” but wholly by Jesus Christ; “not by our own wisdom or prudence,” which could never find out the way; “not by the piety of our hearts or works of righteousness performed in our lives,” which could never be sufficient for the purpose; “but by faith:” the one invariable method, “by which the al-

* Phil. iv. 3.

† Ου δι εαυτων δικαιομεθα, ουδε δια ημετερας σοφιας, η συνεσεως, η ευσεβειας, η ερσων ων καλειρτασαμεθα εν οσιοληι καρδιας, αλλα δια της πισεως, δι ης παλιας της απ αιωνος ο παλιακρωτωρ Θεος εδικειωσεν. 1 Epist. ad Corinth.—This quotation is explained, as well as translated.

Justin and Chrysostom's sentiments.

mighty Sovereign has justified all" his people "ever since the world began."

Justin,—who was first a Gentile philosopher, then an eminent christian, at last a martyr for the truth,—speaks more fully to the point.* “What else could cover our sins, but the righteousness of Jesus Christ? By what possible means could we, unrighteous and unholy creatures, be justified, but only by the “interposition of the “Son of God” in our behalf?—Having, in this clause, made a profession of his faith, the good man, on the contemplation of such a privilege, breaks out into a kind of holy transport. “O sweet and delightful exchange! A dispensation unsearchably wise and gracious! Benefits, quite unexpected, and rich beyond all our hopes! that the sin of many should be hid by one righteous Person; and that the righteousness of one should justify many transgressors.

The following words are remarkably strong, and the sentiments peculiarly bold. But they come from the pen of the finest writer in ecclesiastical antiquity. They have the great name and venerable character of St. Chrysostom, for their recommendatory preface.†—“Fear not,” says he, “on account of any of thy past transgressions of the law, when once thou hast fled by faith to Jesus Christ. The most enormous and most destructive violation of the law is, to be withheld, by the consciousness of any guilt whatever, from believing on Christ. When thou actest faith on him, thou hast fulfilled, I might say, more than fulfilled the

* Τι άλλο τας αμαρτιας ημων ηδυνηθη καλυψαι, η εκεινε δικοσυνη; Εν τινι δικαιωθιναι δυνατον τες ανομιες ημας και ασεβεις, η εν τω νω τε Θεω: Ω ΤΗΣ ΓΑΥΚΕΙΑΣ ΚΑΤΑΛΛΑΓΗΣ, ω της ανεξιχνεαστε δημιουργιας, ω των απροσδοκων δε ενος πολλης ανομιες δικαιωση. Epist. ad Diogn.—Though Du Pin questions the authority of this epistle, he allows it to have been written by an ancient hand. Dr. Cave, as capable a judge, thinks there is no reason to doubt but it is the genuine work of Justin.

† Μη τοιουν φοβηθης, ως τιν νομον παραβαιων, επειδαν τη πισ ει προσηλθες, τοτε γαρ αυτον παραβαινεις, οτε δι αυτον τω Χριστω μη πιστευσης ως αν πιστευσης αυτω, κακεινον επληρωσας και πολλω πλεοι η εκελευσε πολλω γαρ μειζοτα δικαιοσυνη ελαβες. Hom. XVII, in X. ad. Rom.

Milton's.

law. For thou hast received a better righteousness, than it could ever require: thou art possessed of a better obedience, than any creature could possibly pay."

Two or three witnesses of distinguished abilities, and undoubted veracity, are a sufficient confirmation of any cause. For this reason, and to avoid a tiresome prolixity, I have set aside a multitude of voices; which, from the writings of our own and foreign divines, are ready to pour their united evidence.—And lest the business of quotation, though sparingly managed, should seem dry and tedious; I will relieve your weariness, and enliven the collection, by an extract from the prince of English poetry.—Michael, the prophetic archangel, mentioning the destructive consequences of the fall, and asserting the Godhead of that glorious Person, who undertook to be the repairer of their deadly breach; adds,

Which he, who comes thy Saviour, shall secure,
Not by destroying Satan, but his works,
In thee and in thy seed. Nor can this be,
But by fulfilling (that which thou didst want)
Obedience to the law of God, impos'd
On penalty of death; and suff'ring death,
The penalty to thy transgression due;
And due to theirs, which out of thine will grow,
So only can high justice rest appaid.*

Here then is the express determination of our homilies,—supported by the authority of our articles, established by the concurrence of our liturgy,—still farther ratified by the unanimous attestation of several celebrated divines; whose lives were the brightest ornament to our church, and whose writings are the most unexceptionable interpretation of her meaning.—As a capital, to crown and complete this grand column, supervenes the declaration of the ancient Fathers, those who flourished, and with the highest renown, in the first and purest ages of christianity.—So that, if great authorities carry any weight; if

* Milton, book XII. 393.

The amiable family of Camillus.

illustrious names challenge any regard; this tenet comes attended and dignified with very considerable credentials.

Yet I will venture to affirm, that all these, considerable as they appear, are the least of those testimonials, which recommend the doctrine to my Theron's acceptance, and which have gained admittance into the heart of

His most affectionate

ASPASIO.

LETTER IV.

ASPASIO TO THERON.

Dear Theron,

THE family, in which I have the satisfaction to reside, though remarkable for their genteel figure and ample fortune, are still more amiably distinguished by their benevolence, hospitality, and charity.—As they live at a distance from the market town, the lady has converted one apartment of her house into a little dispensatory; and stocked it with some of the most common, the most needed, and most salutary medicines: which, in cases of ordinary indisposition, she distributes to her indigent neighbours, with singular compassion, and with no small success.—This fine morning, Emilia has ordered some skilful hands into the fields, to cull their healing simples, and lay up a magazine of health for the afflicted poor. Camillus is withdrawn to receive his rents, and settle accounts with his tenants.

Suppose, we act in concert with these valuable persons. Suppose, we range the delightful fields of scripture, and form a collection, not of salutiferous

Aspasio establishes the tenet from scripture.

herbs, but of inestimable texts; such as may be of sovereign efficacy, to assuage the anguish of a guilty conscience, and impart saving health to the distempered soul.—Suppose, we open the mines of divine inspiration, and enrich ourselves, not with the gold of Ophir, but with the unsearchable treasures of Christ; or with that perfect righteousness of our Redeemer, which is incomparably more precious; than the revenues of a country, or the produce of Peru.

In pleading for imputed righteousness, we have already urged the authority of our established church, and the suffrage of her most eminent divines.—The opinion of excellent writers, which has been the result of learning, great attention, and earnest prayer, is no contemptible evidence. Yet we must always reserve the casting voice for those infallible umpires, the prophets and apostles. “If we receive,” with a deferential regard, “the witness of men, the witness of God is greater,”* and challenges the most implicit submission.—Which remark naturally leads me to the intended subject of this epistle; or rather calls upon me to fulfil my late engagement, and shew, that the above-mentioned doctrine is copiously revealed, through the whole process of the scriptures.

Let me detach a very significant portion from the epistle to the Romans; which, though little inferior to a decisive proof, is produced only as an introduction to others. “Now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; even the righteousness of God, which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all, and upon all them that believe.”† The righteousness of God signifies that righteousness which the incarnate God wrought out in his own all-glorious person.‡ It is

* John v. 9.

† Rōm. iii. 21, 22.

‡ This explication, or something to the same purpose, has occurred already. But it is hoped, the candid reader will not condemn the repetition, as a disagreeable and jejune tautology.—Because it is so

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styled the righteousness of God, by way of superlative pre-eminence; in opposition to any righteousness of our own, and in contradistinction to the righteousness of all creatures whatever.—This righteousness is without the law. Its efficacy has no dependence on, its merits receive no addition from, any conformity of our practice to the divine law; being complete, absolutely complete in itself, and altogether sufficient to procure the reconciliation and acceptance of sinners.—This righteousness is witnessed by the law and the prophets; receives an uniform attestation from the various writings of the Old Testament. To investigate this attestation, to examine its pertinency; and weigh its sufficiency, is our present pleasing business.

We may begin with that gracious declaration, made to the first transgressors: “The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent’s head;”* shall destroy the works of the devil, and retrieve whatever was lost by his malicious artifices.† How could this be effected, but by restoring that righteousness, which, for a while, our first parents possessed; which they ought always to have held fast; but from which they so soon and so unhappily swerved.—Take the position in the right sense, and christianity is, if not entirely, yet very nearly as old as the creation. It was compre-

consonant to the practice of our great apostle, who repeats the term, re-inculcates the doctrine, and hardly knows how to desist from the favourite topic; like one, who was quite enamoured with the subject, who found music in the words, and whose happiness was bound up in the blessing. Because it is conformable to another, and a greater example. The Lord Jehovah himself, within the compass of one chapter, once and again, yea, a third and a fourth time, styles this wonderful obedience, my righteousness. As though the God of infinite perfection gloried in it; thought himself most eminently magnified by it; and was jealous to have all the honour resulting from it. See Isa. li.

* Gen. iii. 15.

† In some such sense, I think, our first parents must understand the promise. Otherwise, it could yield them no effectual relief, under the distressing sense of their own misery, and the dismal apprehension of their posterity’s ruin.

from the scriptures of the Old Testament.

hended in this blessed promise, as the stamina of the largest plants are contained in the substance of their respective seeds: every subsequent revelation being no more than a gradual evolution of this grand evangelical principle; acting like the vegetative powers of nature, which, in rearing an oak with all its spread of branches, only expand the tunicles, and fill up the vessels of the acorn.

This doctrine seems to have been typically taught, by the remarkable manner of clothing our first parents.—All they could do for their own recovery, was like the patched and beggarly mantle of fig-leaves. This they relinquish, and God himself furnishes them with apparel.* Animals are slain, not for food, but sacrifice; and the naked criminals are arrayed with the skins of those slaughtered beasts. The victims figured the expiation of Christ's death; the clothing typified the imputation of his righteousness.—In perfect conformity, perhaps with a reference, to the passage thus interpreted, the apostle just now expressed himself, “even the righteousness of God, which is not only made over† to all believers, as a rich portion; but put upon all,† as a beautiful garment.” Whereby alone their moral deformity can be covered, and their everlasting confusion prevented.—Milton, it is certain, speaking of this memorable transaction, considers it in the same spiritual sense:

Nor he their outward only with the skins
Of beasts, but inward nakedness (much more
Opprobrious!) with his robe of righteousness
Arrayed, cover'd from his Father's sight.

“In thy seed,” says the great Jehovah to his servant Abraham, “shall all the nations of the earth be blessed.”‡ That the seed here mentioned is Christ, the apostle places beyond all doubt.§ Both scripture

* Gen. iii. 21.

† Rom. iii. 22. ΕΙΣ παντας, ΕΠΙ παντας της πιστευουσας.

‡ Gen. xxii. 18.

§ See St. Paul's comment upon this invaluable promise, Gal. iii. 8. This commentator, we all allow, was guided by the Spirit, and knew

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and reason declare, that true blessedness must necessarily include—the pardon of sins, and the favour of God,—the sanctification of our souls; and the inheritance of life eternal. None of which are to be acquired by human performance; but all are to be sought, and all may be found, in the root and offspring of Abraham, Jesus Christ: who is therefore most pertinently styled, the Desire of all nations:* the actual desire of every enlightened nation; and the implicit desire of all nations whatever; because all, without any exception, covet what is to be derived only from Jesus Christ the Righteous, real happiness.

The patriarchal age, and the legal economy, bore their testimony to this truth, by typical persons, emblematical miracles, and figurative usages. Indeed, the whole ceremonial service was a grand series of types, representing Christ and his everlasting righteousness. In all which this was the unanimous, though silent language: “Behold the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sins of the world.”—These I shall not stay to discuss, because proofs of a more explicit and positive nature wait for our consideration. Only I would just make a transient observation, relating to one very remarkable constitution in the Jewish ritual.

The high priest had, on the front of his mitre, a plate of pure gold, engraven with that venerable motto, † “Holiness to the Lord;” which was always to be on his forehead, when he performed the solemn ministration of the sanctuary; and for this important reason, that the people “might be accepted before the Lord.” ‡ Did not this most clearly foreshew the immaculate holiness of our great high priest; and with equal clearness imply, that his holiness should procure acceptance for all his followers?

In the book of Job, we have several hints of this

the mind of God. According to his exposition of the text, it is pregnant with the doctrine of justification by faith, and contains an abridgment of the gospel.

* Hag. iii. 7. † Exod. xxviii. 36, 37. ‡ Exod. xxxviii. 38.

from the scriptures of the Old Testament.

truth, and one passage very express to our purpose. Elihu describes an unconverted person, under the chastening hand of Providence. Whose life, through the extremity of his disease, drew near to the grave; and his soul, through the multitude of his iniquities, was ready to become a prey to the destroyers. In this deplorable condition, "if there be present with him, the Messenger* of the covenant of peace! that great Interpreter* of the divine counsels," who, for his super-excellent wisdom, is justly deemed "one among a thousand," or rather the chiefest among ten thousand; if he, by his enlightening Spirit, vouchsafe to shew unto the afflicted man his own perfect righteousness; that most meritorious uprightness, on which alone a sinner may depend, both for temporal and eternal salvation: then the poor distressed creature, attentive to this instruction, and applying this righteousness, is made partaker of pardon; God, the sovereign Lord of life and death, is gracious unto him; and saith, in the greatness of his strength, as well as in the multitude of his mercies, "Deliver him from going down into the pit of corruption," as a pledge of his deliverance from the pit of perdition. For I have found out a ransom, sufficient to satisfy my justice; I have received an atonement, in behalf of this once obnoxious, now reconciled transgressor.

But why do I select one particular paragraph? It seems to be the main design of the whole book, to overthrow all pretensions of any justifying righteousness in man; that the wretched sinner, nay, that the greatest

* See Job xxxiii. 22, &c.—Christ is called מלאך The angel of the divine presence, Isa. lxviii. 9. The messenger of the covenant, Mal. iii. 1.—He is also, in the most unlimited sense of the phrase, מליץ The Interpreter of the divine counsels: he, to whom the Father hath given the tongue of the learned, and by whom he makes known the otherwise unsearchable mysteries of the gospel. Should any doubt remain concerning the propriety of applying this passage to our Lord Jesus Christ, the reader, I hope, will give himself the pleasure of perusing the polite Witsius, Oecon. lib. IV. cap. iii. sect. 31. and Dr. Grey's valuable notes upon the place, in his Liber Jobi.

saint, stripped of every personal plea, may rely only on the merits of a Redeemer.—This is the final issue of all those warm debates, which pass between the afflicted hero and his censorious friends. This is the grand result of Elihu's calm reasoning, and of God Almighty's awful interrogatories. The apparent centre this,* in which all the lines terminate; justly therefore to be considered, as the principal scope of the whole work.

I must not omit an excellent observation, which I find in some critical and explanatory notes on the last words of David.† The judicious author proving, that this song relates to Christ; that it displays the dignity of our Redeemer, under the character of the King, and the Just One; adds as an explication of the last amiable and glorious title:—"Our Lord Jesus Christ is so called, not so much for having fulfilled all righteousness, in his own person, and performing an unerring obedience to the will of God; as because by his righteousness imputed to us, we also upon the terms of the gospel are justified,‡ or accounted righteous before God."

I think we may evidently discern the same vein of evangelical doctrine, running through many of the psalms.—"He shall convert my soul;"§ turn me, not

* See Job xlii. 6. † By Dr. Grey. See 2 Sam. xxiii. 1, &c.

‡ That is, freely; or, as the prophet speaks, "without money and without price." For nothing is requisite, in order to a participation of Christ and his benefits, but a conviction of our extreme need, and an unfeigned desire to receive them; receive them as gifts of pure grace, vouchsafed to the most undeserving creatures. This point, which is so intimately connected with our comfort and hope, the reader may see more fully stated in Dialogue XV.

§ Psal. xxiii. 3. I am sensible, the word שׁוּב may signify to refresh or restore; may answer to the Greek phrase ἀνεψύξει; and denote the comforts of the Holy Ghost. This verse may also bear the same signification with the participle επιστρέψας, in our Lord's exhortation to Peter, when thou art converted. Not describing the first grand revolution in the heart, by which a new determination is given to the judgment, and a new bias to the affections, but expressing those subsequent operations of the divine Spirit, by which we are recovered from our various relapses, and healed of our daily infirmities. And I

from the scriptures of the Old Testament.

only from sin and ignorance, but from every false confidence, and every deceitful refuge. "He shall bring me forth in paths of righteousness;" in those paths of imputed righteousness, which are always adorned with the trees of holiness; are always watered with the fountains of consolation; and always terminate in everlasting rest. Some perhaps may ask, Why I give this sense to the passage? Why may it not signify the paths of duty, and the way of our own obedience?—Because such effects are here mentioned, as never have resulted, and never can result, from any duties of our own. These are not green pastures, but a parched and blasted heath. These are not still waters, but a troubled and disorderly stream.* Neither can these speak peace, or administer comfort, when we pass through the valley and shadow of death. To yield these blessings, is the exalted office of Christ, and the sole prerogative of his obedience.

Admitting, that this obedience is of sovereign advantage, during the years of life, and in the hour of death; it may still occur to the serious and inquisitive mind, what will be our safeguard, after the great change? When the soul departs, and our place on earth knows us no more; when the body revives, and we shall all stand before the judgment-seat; what will then avail us?—The same righteousness of our divine Lord. This, if I mistake not, is displayed in the very next psalm; which begins with a solicitous inquiry; sub-

question, whether there is any instance in which we more frequently need these restoring aids, than in the case of adhering to our Redeemer's righteousness. So prone are we to forget our resting-place! so liable to fall from our stedfastness in Christ!

* Blasted, disorderly—Let not these words grate on the ear; or if they grate on the ear, let them humble the heart. What were Job's duties? Zealous and exemplary; practised from his very youth; and neither excelled nor equalled by any person on earth. Yet these, in point of justification, were not a whit bitter than Aspasio represents. Let us hear the last words of this matchless saint, "I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." From this confession we learn, that, with all his furniture of personal obedience, he had just enough to be ashamed, confounded, undone.

Aspasio establishes the tenet

joins a satisfactory answer; and closes with a most pertinent but rapturous apostrophe.—This is the inquiry, “Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord; or who shall rise up in his holy place?”—This is the answer, “Even he that hath clean hands, and a pure heart.”* “He shall receive the blessings of plenary remission from the Lord, and righteousness also from the God of his salvation:”† even that perfect righteousness, which is not acquired by man, but bestowed by Jehovah; which is not performed by the saint, but received by the sinner; which is the only solid basis, to support our hopes of happiness; the only valid plea, for an admission into the mansions of joy.—Then follows the apostrophe. The prophet foresees the ascension of Christ and his saints into the kingdom of heaven. He sees his Lord marching at the head of the redeemed world, and conducting them into regions of honour and joy. Suitably to such a view, and in a most beautiful strain of poetry, he addresses himself to the heavenly portals: “Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory, with all the heirs of his grace and righteousness, shall make their triumphant entry; shall enter in, and go out no more.”

Having shewn the powerful and extensive influence of our Redeemer’s righteousness; its efficacy, in this world to justify, in the other world to glorify; well may the sweet singer of Israel profess his supreme value for it, and entire dependence on it. “I will go forth in the strength of the Lord God, and will make mention of thy righteousness only.”‡ As though he

* Psa. xxiv. 4. Who hath clean hands and a pure heart? he only, whose heart is sprinkled from an evil conscience, by the precious blood of Christ; and who lives by faith in the Son of God, Heb. x. 22. Gal. ii. 20.

† The words of the apostle, *ο λαμβανων την δωρεαν της δικαιοσυνης* are almost a literal translation, are the very best explanation of the psalmist’s language, *ישא צרקה* Rom. v. 17. Psa. xxiv. 5.

‡ Psa. lxxi. 46. There is, in the Hebrew original, and in the new translation, a very emphatical repetition; which adds weight to the

from the scriptures of the Old Testament.

had said, I will have recourse to no other righteousness, for the consolation of my soul. I will plead no other righteousness, for the recommendation of my person. I will fly to no other righteousness, for my final acceptance and endless felicity.—This is that “raiment of needlework and clothing of wrought gold,”* in which the king’s daughter is introduced to him, “who sitteth in the heavens over all.” This is that garment “for glory and for beauty,”† which clothed our High Priest; and descending to his very feet,‡ clothes and adorns the lowest members of his mystical body.

Recollecting all the foregoing particulars, justly, and on the most rational ground, does our royal author declare, “Blessed are the people that know the joyful sound: they shall walk, O Lord, in the light of thy countenance. In thy name shall they rejoice all the day; and in thy righteousness shall they be exalted.”§ —They are truly blessed, they alone are happy, who know the joyful sound of the gospel; not only receive it with their ears, but admit it into their very hearts; so as to partake of the sacred peace, and spiritual liberty, which it proclaims. “They shall walk in the light of thy countenance;” they shall enjoy such communications of thy grace, and such manifestations of thy love, as will constitute the serenity and sunshine of their souls.—In thy name, O Lord Jesus Christ, in thy glorious person, and thy infinite merit, shall they rejoice; and not occasionally, but habitually; not barely at some distinguished intervals, but all the day. Their joy shall be as lasting, as it is substantial.—“And in thy righteousness shall they be exalted,” set above the tantalizing power of temporal things; placed beyond the slavish fear of the last enemy; and raised,

sentiment, and demands a peculiar attention from the reader: “Thy righteousness, even thine only.”

* *Psa. xlv. 13.*

† *Exod. xxviii. 31.* Notabat (says Witsius upon the place) *illud pallium justitiæ, quò industus est, et suos induit Christus.*

‡ *Rev. i. 13.*

§ *Psa. lxxxix. 15, 16.*

Aspasio establishes the tenet

when time shall be no more, to a state of celestial glory, and consummate bliss.

How thoroughly evangelical is this seraphic writer? He has joy, he has blessedness, and he looks for everlasting exaltation; yet not from his faith, his repentance, and his own sincere obedience. According to this, which is the modern scheme, faith, instead of receiving, would supplant the Lord Jesus; repentance, instead of being the gift of Christ, would become his rival; and sincere obedience, which is for the praise and glory of God, would eclipse and impoverish his grace.—But David adopts no such sentiments; David maintains no such doctrine. This is the invariable language of his heart. “All my springs of hope, of trust, and consolation, “O thou adored Emmanuel, are in thee.”*

This sense is the less precarious, I had almost said the more certain, as it exactly corresponds with the analogy of faith, and coincides with the express declarations of other scriptures.—Isaiah is styled the evangelist of the Jewish church; because more frequently than any of the prophets he celebrates, and more copiously explains, this and other peculiarities of the gospel.—In the very first chapter, he preaches these glad tidings: “Zion shall be redeemed with judgment, and her converts with righteousness.” Zion, the gospel church, composed of fallen creatures sometime disobedient to their God, and enslaved to Satan, shall be redeemed: redeemed, not with corruptible things, as silver and gold, but by severe judgments executed on their glorious Head, and gracious Representative; and not by these only, but by righteousness also; by the perfect and most meritorious righteousness of the same divinely excellent Person.†

Our sacred author bears his testimony, with warmer zeal and brighter evidence, as he proceeds in his in-

* *Psa. lxxxvii. 7.*

† *Hanc redemptionem docet Spiritus Sanctus habere nos in obedientia et sanguine Jesu Christi. Isa. i. 27. Vitring. in Loc.*

from the scriptures of the Old Testament.

comparable discoursés. “Surely, shall one say, (or; as it may be rendered, only) “in the Lord have I righteousness and strength.* Please to observe, Theron: it is not said, in my own works, in my own repentance, no, nor in my own faith, but “in the Lord Jesus” have I righteousness: righteousness for justification, and strength for sanctification: an imputed righteousness, to procure my acceptance; an imparted strength, to produce my holiness: the first constituting my title to the everlasting inheritance; the last forming my personal preparation for its enjoyment.—Surely; which expresses a firm persuasion, and an unshaken affiance. Only; which denotes an utter renunciation of all other confidence, and excludes every other ground of hope. Righteousness;† the original is in the plural number: which seems to be used, not without an important design, to enlarge the significancy of the word, and make it correspond with the richness of the blessing: so that it may imply the fulness and super eminent excellency of this gift of grace; as comprehending whatever, either of suffering or obedience, is requisite to the justification of sinners.‡ —Insomuch that “in the Lord Jesus Christ, and his all-perfect righteousness, the seed of Israel shall not only be justified, but rejoice; and not only confide, but glory.”§

What he had just now asserted, he exemplifies in his own, and in the person of every true believer. “I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath “covered me with the

* Isa. xlv. 24.

† צְרוּקוֹת parallel to which, both in construction and signification, is the phrase used by St. John, Δικαιομαλα, Rev. x. 1. The fine linen is the righteousness (properly the righteousnesses) of the saints.

‡ Vult dicere propheta, in Jehovah esse id propter quod peccator resipiscens et credens, a peccatis absolvi, et jure ad benedictionem cœlestem donari queat ac debeat: esse illud Jehovah proprium; ab ipso quæ eodem; quod extra ipsum non invenitur. *Vitring.*

§ Isa. xlv. 25.

Aspasio establishes the tenet

robe of righteousness.”*—True believers are compared, in one of our sacred eclogues, to “a company of horses in Pharaoh’s chariot;”† to horses, than which no animal is more stately and graceful; to Egyptian horses, which were the best and completest then in the world; to those in Pharaoh’s chariot, which doubtless were a choice set, selected from thousands, and finest where all were fine. Here, methinks, I see the comparison realized. Christians, endued with such a spirit as breathes in this animated text, are like a collection of those gallant and majestic steeds; not destined to low drudgery, but appointed to run in the royal chariot; all life, full of fire, champing the bit, and eager for the chace. Nothing can more beautifully describe a state of exultation and ardour, than the preceding similitude, or the following words.—“I will rejoice; I will greatly rejoice; my very soul, and all that is within me, shall be joyful in my God.” Wherefore? Because he has clothed me, undone sinner as I am, “with the garments of salvation:” because “he hath covered me, defective as all my services are, with the robe of righteousness:” a robe which hides every sin, that in thought, word, or deed I have committed: a robe, which screens from the sword of justice, the curse of the law, and all the vengeance which my iniquities have deserved: a robe, which adorns and dignifies my soul; renders it fairer than the moon, clear as the sun, and meet for the inheritance of saints in light.

Having represented this righteousness, in a variety of grand and charming views,—the prophet further characterizes it, as the unalterable and never-failing origin of our justification and happiness. This he displays by a train of images, bold and sublime to the last degree. “Lift up your eyes to the heavens, and look upon the earth beneath: for the heavens shall vanish away like smoke, and the earth shall wax old like a garment; but my salvation shall be for ever,

* Isa. xlv. 10.

† Cant. i. 9.

from the scriptures of the Old Testament.

and my righteousness shall not be abolished."*—Observe the vast dimensions, and the firm foundations, both of the upper and lower world. How strong, how stedfast, they all appear! Yet these, indissoluble as they may seem, shall perish.—This majestic globe, on which mountains rise and oceans roll, shall lose its beautiful gloss; and be laid aside, like a decayed useless garment. Even that more majestic concave, in which stars are fixed, and planets revolve, shall be deprived of its very superior lustre, and vanish away like the dissolving smoke.—Whereas my salvation, with all the spiritual and heavenly blessings included in it, shall subsist and flourish for ever. And my righteousness, which is the meritorious cause of all, shall be an immovable foundation for repose and happiness.—In short, whether there be moral virtues, they shall be found wanting; whether there be christian graces, they shall prove ineffectual: but my conformity to the law, and my obedience unto death, neither need addition, nor admit of change; they are all-sufficient in their merit, and in their virtue everlasting.

When day arises on our benighted hemisphere, it breaks and spreads by a gradual increase; forming, first, the gray twilight; next the blushing morn; then the shining light; till all is heightened into the blaze and glow of noon.—When spring revisits our wintry clime, she also advances by gentle degrees: first, swells the bud, and protrudes the germ; then expands the leaf, and unfolds the blossom; the face of things is continually changing for the better; and nature shews herself, almost every hour, in some new and more engaging dress.—This leisurely process renders the strong effulgence of the celestial orb more supportable; and the lovely expansions of the vegetable creation, more observable.

So progressive and increasing are the displays of Jesus Christ, exhibited in the scriptures, whose ap-

* Isa. li. 6.

Aspasio establishes the tenet

pearance is unspeakably more delightful to the soul, than the emanations of orient light are to the eye, or the entertainments of the vernal season to our other senses.—The gloom of fallen Adam was alleviated by a ray from this Sun of Righteousness.—Abraham and the patriarchs saw afar off the blessed “Jesus, as the morning spread upon the mountains.”*—The psalmist and the prophets beheld his nearer approaches, like the sun upon the point of rising.—To the apostles and evangelists he arose, in perfect lustre, and complete beauty. The grace and the privileges, which dawned upon other dispensations of religion, are brought even to meridian light by the gospel.—This I mention, just to intimate what you may expect from a following letter.

In the mean time, let us attend to the prophet Daniel. He records a message from heaven, which is more clearly descriptive of this great evangelical blessing, than all the foregoing texts.—He had been under much distress, and in great perplexity; afflicted for his own, and his countrymen’s sins; anxious for the welfare of the chosen nation, and the prosperity of true religion. When an angel was dispatched to the holy mourner, with this most cheering news; which, received by faith, is the richest balm to a wounded conscience, and the only remedy for a guilty world: “Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people, and upon thy holy city; to finish the transgression, and make an end of sin; to make reconciliation for iniquity; and to bring in everlasting righteousness.”†—This prophecy relates to the Messiah. It foretels, that, in the fulness of time, he should “finish the transgression;‡ restrain and suppress the power of corruption, by purifying to himself a peculiar people;—should “make an end of sin;”§ by sealing up or secreting its guilt, and totally abolishing its condemning power:—should make reconciliation for iniquity, by sustaining the vengeance due to sinners, and fully

* Joel ii. 2.

† Dan. ix. 24.

‡ בלא

§ חתם

from the scriptures of the Old Testament.

satisfying the divine justice for all their offences:—should not barely publish, but accomplish and “bring in righteousness;”* that it may be presented both to God and man: to God, for the reparation of his violated law; to man, for the justification of his obnoxious person.—That this righteousness should be everlasting; not such as may be compared to the morning cloud, which passeth away; or to the early dew, which is soon dried up; but such as will outlast the hills, on which the latter shines; and outlast the skies, through which the former sails: A righteousness, whose merits extend to every period and every action of our lives; and when once made ours by imputation, remains and will remain our unalienable property.—To this all the saints, who in ancient generations pleased God, owe their acceptance; on this all the children of men, who in future ages hope for mercy, must rely; by this the whole assembly of the blessed will be invariably and eternally precious in his sight.—Exalted character! Can it be applicable to any thing less, than the righteousness of the incarnate God? Surely none can imagine that Daniel would speak in such a magnificent strain, of any human righteousness; since, in this very chapter, he professedly depreciates himself, his fellow-saints, and all human performances whatever.

I forgot, in the proper place, to consult the prophet Jeremiah. Let us now refer ourselves to his determination. Celebrating the Saviour of Judah and Israel, he says, “This is his name, whereby he shall be called, The Lord our Righteousness:” a determination so clear and satisfactory, as not to leave, one would almost conclude, any room for appeal.—Should the sense of the passage be questioned, I think there

† להביא I think, must signify more than to publish or preach. Had this been all that the angel was commissioned to declare, לְבַשֵּׁר or להגיד would probably have been used.—The word implies such a bringing in (the original is the same) as when Abel brought his sacrifice to the altar, for the divine acceptance; and Esau brought his venison into the chamber, for his father's use, Gen. iv. xxxii. 31.

cannot be a more authentic explication, than the preceding extracts from Isaiah and Daniel. And having the unanimous attestation of two inspired penmen, we may venture to abide by such authority, even in opposition to some respectable names. In the verse immediately foregoing, the essential holiness of the Redeemer is displayed, under the character of the Righteous Branch.—The sanctity which he will impart to his subjects, is intimated by his “executing judgment and justice in the earth.”—In the clause we have quoted, his imputed righteousness is foretold and promised.—Thus the several sentences are distinct; the description of the Saviour is complete; and he appears perfectly suited to the exigences of a wretched world; in their worst estate, enslaved to Satan, and in their best, falling short of the glory of God.—This, therefore, I take to be the grand and extensive meaning of the prophet; not barely, the righteous Lord; not barely, the Lord who infuses righteousness into sinful souls; but the incarnate Jehovah,* whose mediatorial righteousness is, by an act of gracious imputation, ours,—to all the intents of justification and salvation, ours,—as much ours for these blessed purposes, as if we had wrought it out, each in his own person.†

Foreseeing and contemplating these blessings, the enraptured Zechariah cries out, “Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! shout, O daughter of Jerusalem! behold, thy King cometh unto thee: he is just, and

* Jer. xxiii. 5, 6. In these golden, infinitely better than golden verses, are characterized the divine and human natures of Christ, together with his mediatorial office. The divine nature; in that he enjoys the honours of the Godhead, and possesses the incommunicable name Jehovah.—The human nature; in that he was to be raised up unto David, and spring as a branch from his root.—The mediatorial office; in that he is the righteousness of his people, and the salvation of sinners.

† Witsius, speaking of the mediatorial righteousness, has written in Latin what Aspasio expresses in English: *Per illam obedientiam tota multitudo illorum, qui ad ipsum pertinent; justii constituuntur; id est censeatur jus habere ad æternum vitam, non minus quam si quilibet eorum in propria persona illam obedientiam præstitisset.*—*Lib. II. cap. v.*

from the scriptures of the Old Testament.

having salvation, lowly and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt, the foal of an ass.*—He addresses himself to Zion and Jerusalem, to the ecclesiastical and civil community. Persons of all ranks and of every character, are exhorted to rejoice; to rejoice greatly; nay, to express the joy of their heart, by loud hallelujahs, and triumphant exclamations.—What is the cause of this general delight? what can fill both church and state with such high satisfaction? “Thy King cometh unto thee;” even that glorious King, who rules in heaven, and rules in the heart; whose service is freedom, and whose laws are love.—He his just; divinely righteous in his nature, and he cometh to fulfil all righteousness in thy stead. Having salvation: hereby procuring salvation for his people; deliverance from sin, from death, and hell; from every evil thou deservest, and from every misery thou fearest.—That none may be discouraged, and none deterred, from applying to this Prince of peace, he is, amidst all the honours of his sovereignty, lowly; does not abhor the basest, will not despise the meanest; to the poor his gospel is preached, and for the guilty his benefits are intended.—As an emblem, as a proof, of this most amiable and condescending goodness, he will ride: not like the conquerors of old in a triumphal chariot, or on a richly caparisoned steed, but upon that most mean and despicable of all animals, an ass; nay, what is still more despicable, on a rude undisciplined colt, the wayward foal of an ass.†

* Zech. ix.

† Because some profane scoffers have presumed to ridicule this very remarkable incident of our Lord's life, some interpreters of note have endeavoured to rescue it from their abusive attempts, by observing,—“that the eastern asses are much larger and more graceful than ours; that patriarchs and judges thought it no disgrace to ride upon them.”

This observation has, I fear, more of false delicacy, than of real truth or christian simplicity. In the patriarchal ages, I acknowledge, persons of high distinction thought it no dishonour, in their journeys and processions, to appear on this animal. But I very much question, whether the same fashion subsisted, or the same way of thinking

And now,—since my Theron confesses himself to be miserable, and poor, and naked: since the eyes of his understanding are enlightened, to see the impurity of his heart; the imperfection of his righteousness; and that he is, in himself, a lost undone sinner,—what advice, cheering and salutary, shall I suggest? O! let him listen to an Adviser, infinitely more able and compassionate; listen to him, who is the Ancient of Days, and the Wisdom of God: I counsel thee,” says the blessed Jesus, “to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed.”* Gold; what can this denote, but all those spiritual treasures, which are hid in Christ? which are, in measure, unsearchable; in value, inestimable; in duration, eternal.—White raiment; surely this must signify the righteousness of our Redeemer, which is all purity, and all perfection;

prevailed, in the reign of Tiberius Cæsar. See Jam. iii. 3.—Nay, I am strongly inclined to suspect, that this plain primitive custom was superseded, even in the days of Zechariah. For long before this time I find, that “Solomon had four thousand stalls of horses for his chariots, and twelve thousand horsemen; and that horses were brought to him out of Egypt, and divers other countries.” 1 Kings iv. 26. x. 28, 29. From this period, it is probable, none but the poor and inferior sort of people rode upon asses.—When Isaiah prophesied, the land was full of horses, Isa. ii. 7. Under the Persian monarchy; when Zechariah flourished, horses were in still greater repute. Well therefore might the prophet say, with wonder and delight, “lowly, and riding upon an ass!”

Was it a mean attitude? exceedingly mean; mean even to contempt? I make no scruple to grant it: nay, I make my boast of it! It is for the honour of my Lord’s condescension; it is for the utter confusion of all worldly pomp and grandeur; and it is for the unspeakable comfort of my sinful soul.—Most charming humility! most endearing gentleness! He, “who rideth upon the heavens as it were upon a horse, and maketh the clouds his chariot,” to atone for my pride, and to encourage my hope, disdained not, in the days of his flesh, to ride upon an ass.

They who would dignify this action, any otherwise than from its ever to be admired abasement, seem to have forgotten the stable and the manger. They who are offended at this circumstance, and ashamed to own their Lord in his deep humiliation, have but very imperfectly learned the apostle’s lesson; “God forbid that I should glory, save in “the cross of Christ Jesus my Lord.”

* Rev. iii. 18.

from the scriptures of the Old Testament.

which clothes the soul, as a most suitable and commodious garment; which covers every deformity and every sin; and presents the believer, free from shame, and free from blemish; before the throne of the Majesty in the heavens.

This, to use the delicate language, and amiable image of Isaiah,—this doctrine, embraced by a realizing faith, is the only pillow of rest, “wherewith ye may cause the weary and heavy laden soul to find repose;” and this is the sovereign cordial, prepared by infinite mercy, for the refreshment of anxious and desponding transgressors. O! let us not be in the number of those proud and refractory creatures, who, though they infinitely needed, “yet would not hear”* the gracious news, nor receive the unspeakable benefit.—In this respect, and in this most eminently, is that other saying of the same sublime teacher, true; “The Lord of hosts shall be for a crown of glory, and for a diadem of beauty, to the residue of his people.”† Shall we tear from our temples, or reject with disdain, this unfading and heavenly ornament, in order to substitute a mean and ordinary chaplet of our own.

Let me add a pertinent passage from one of our celebrated dramatic writers; which, if proper in his sense, will be incomparably more so, according to our manner of application.

———It were contemning,
 With impious self-sufficient arrogance,
 This bounty of our God, not to accept,
 With every mark of honour, such a gift.

I might proceed to urge this expostulation of the poet, as I might easily have multiplied my quotations from holy writ. But, studious of brevity, I leave both, without enlargement, to your own meditation. Yet more studious of my friend's happiness, I cannot conclude without wishing him an interest, a clear and established interest, in this everlasting righteousness

* Isa. xxviii. 12.

† Isa. xxviii. 5.

Faith in Christ's righteousness springs from the ruins of self-sufficiency.

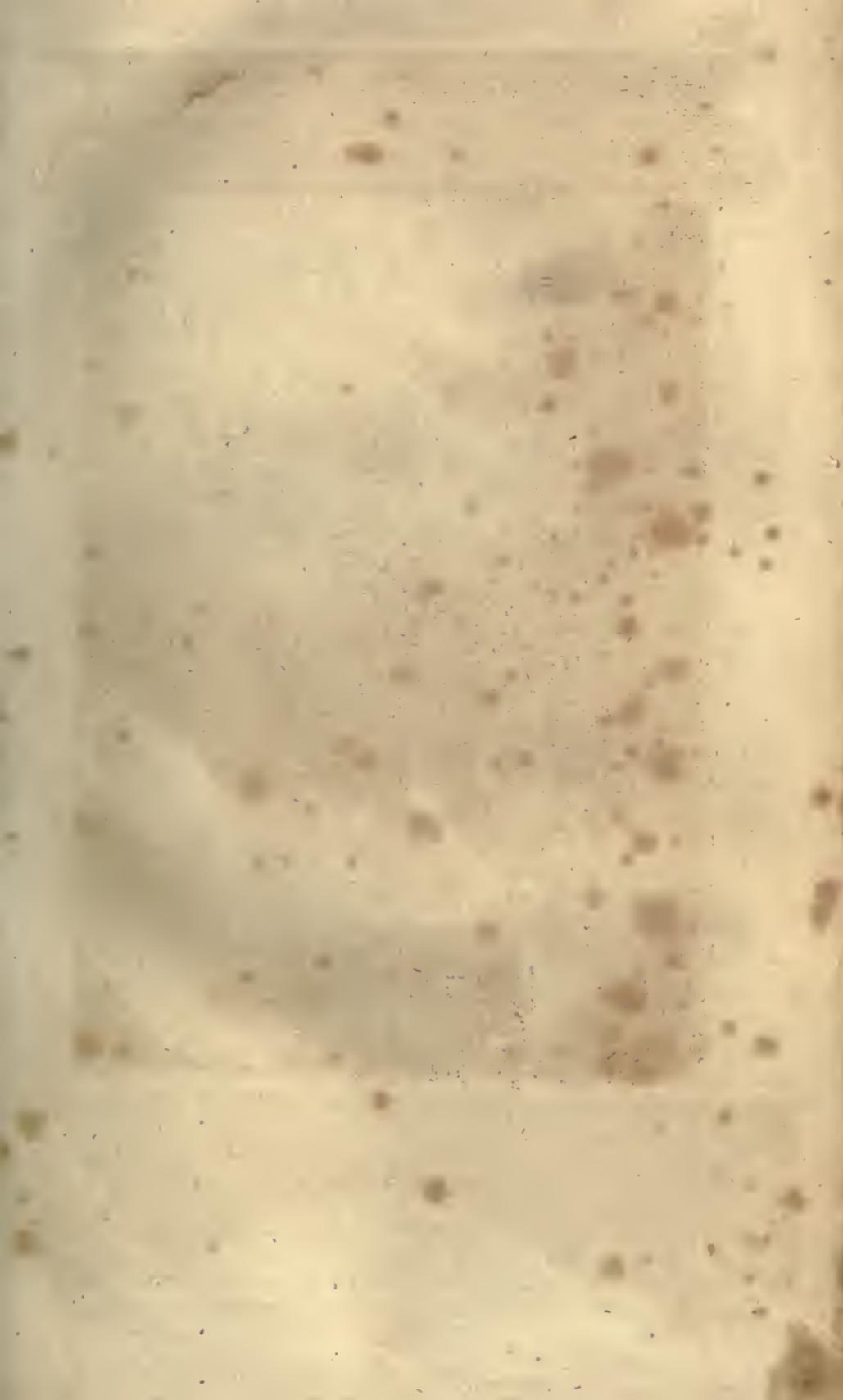
of Christ. For so, and so only, can he have "everlasting consolation and good hope through grace."—I am, my dear Theron,

Inviolably yours,

ASPASIO.

P. S. Opposite to the room in which I write, is a most agreeable prospect of the gardens and the fields; these covered with herbage, and loaded with corn; those adorned with flowers, and abounding with esculents: all appearing with so florid and so beautiful an aspect, that they really seem, in conformity to the psalmist's description, even to laugh and sing.—Let me just observe, that all these fine scenes, all these rich productions, sprung,—from what? From the dissolution of the respective seeds. The seeds planted by the gardener, and the grain sowed by the husbandman, first perished in the ground, and then the copious increase arose.

Much in the same manner, a true faith in Christ and his righteousness arises,—from what? From the ruins of self-sufficiency, and the death of personal excellency. Let me therefore entreat my Theron, still to take the diary for his counsellor; still to keep an eye on the depravity of his nature, and the miscarriages of his life. The more clearly we see, the more deeply we feel, our guilt and our misery, the more highly we value the obedience of our blessed Surety.—In such a heart, faith will flourish as a rose, and lift up its head like a cedar in Lebanon. To such a soul, the great Redeemer's righteousness will be welcome, as waters to the thirsty soil, or as rivers in the sandy desert.





NEURON & ASPASTO.

Letter the Fifth.

A remarkable panic.

LETTER V.

ASPASIO TO THERON.

Dear Theron,

GIVE me leave to relate an uncommon incident, which happened a little while ago in this neighbourhood, and of which I myself was a spectator.—The day was the sabbath; the place appropriated to divine worship, was the scene of this remarkable affair.

A boy came running into the church breathless and trembling. He told, but in a low voice, those who stood near, that a pressgang* was advancing to besiege the doors, and arrest the sailors.—An alarm was immediately taken. The sea-men with much hurry, and no small anxiety, began to shift for themselves. The rest of the congregation, perceiving an unusual stir, were struck with surprise.—A whisper of inquiry ran from seat to seat; which increased, by degrees, into a confused murmur. No one could inform his neighbour; therefore every one was left to solve the appearance, from the suggestions of a timorous imagination. Some suspected the town was on fire. Some were apprehensive of an invasion from the Spaniards. Others looked up, and looked round, to see if the walls were not giving way, and the roof falling upon their heads.—In a few moments, the consternation became general. The men stood like statues, in silent amazement, and unavailing perplexity. The women shrieked aloud; fell into fits; sunk to the ground in a swoon. Nothing

* The reader, it is hoped, will excuse whatever may appear low, or favour of the plebeian, in any of these circumstances. If Aspasio had set himself to invent the description of a panic, he would probably have formed it upon some raised and dignified incident. But as this was a real matter of fact, which lately happened in one of our sea-port towns; truth, even in a plain dress, may possibly be no less acceptable than fiction, tricked up with the most splendid embellishments.

was seen but wild disorder ; nothing heard, but tumultuous clamour.—Drowned was the preacher's voice. Had he spoke in thunder, his message would scarce have been regarded. To have gone on with his work, amidst such a prodigious ferment, had been like arguing with a whirlwind, or talking to a tempest.

This brought to my mind that great tremendous day, when the heavens will pass away ; when the earth will be dissolved ; and all its inhabitants receive their final doom.—If, at such incidents of very inferior dread, our hearts are ready to fail ; what unknown and inconceivable astonishment, must seize the guilty conscience, when the hand of the Almighty shall open those unparalleled scenes of wonder, desolation, and horror !—when the trumpet shall sound,—the dead arise,—the world be in flames,—the Judge on the throne, and all mankind at the bar !

“ The trumpet shall sound,”* says the prophetic teacher. And how startling, how stupendous the summons ! Nothing equal to it, nothing like it, was ever heard through all the regions of the universe, or all the revolutions of time.—When conflicting armies have discharged the bellowing artillery of war, or when victorious armies have shouted for joy of the conquest, the seas and shores have rung, the mountains and plains have echoed. But the shout of the archangel, and the trump of God, will resound from pole to pole ; will pierce the centre, and shake the pillars of heaven.—Stronger, stronger still ! it will penetrate even the deepest recesses of the tomb. It will pour its amazing thunder into all those abodes of silence. The dead, the very dead, shall hear.

When the trumpet has sounded, the dead shall arise.—In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, the graves open, the monumental piles are cleft asunder, and the nations underground start into day. What an immense harvest of men and women, springing up from the caverns of the earth, and the depths of the sea ! Stand

* 1 Cor. xv. 52.

a while, my soul, and consider the wonderful spectacle.—Adam formed in paradise, and the babe born but yesterday, the earliest ages, and latest generations, meet upon the level. Jews and Gentiles, Greeks and Barbarians, people of all climes and languages, unite in the promiscuous throng. Here those vast armies, which, like swarms of locusts, covered countries; which, with an irresistible sweep, overrun empires; here they all appear, and here they all are lost; lost like the small drop of a bucket, when plunged into the unfathomable and boundless ocean.—O! the multitudes! the multitudes! which these eyes shall survey, when God “ calleth the heavens from above, and the earth, that he may judge his people.” What shame must flush the guilty cheek! what anguish wound the polluted breast! to have all their filthy practices, and infamous tempers, exposed before this innumerable crowd of witnesses! Fly, my Theron; and fly, my soul; instantly let us fly, earnestly let us fly, to the purifying blood of Jesus; that all our sins may be blotted out; that we may be found unblameable and unreprouable in the presence of the assembled world; and, what is infinitely more to be revered, in the sight of the omnipotent God.

When the swarm issues, the hive will burn. There is no more need of this habitable globe. The elect have fought the good fight, and finished their course. The wicked have been tried, and found incorrigible. The important drama is ended: every actor has performed his part: now therefore the scenes are taken down, and the stage is demolished.—“ Woe be to the earth, and to the works thereof!” Its streams are turned into pitch, its dust into brimstone; and the breath of the Almighty, like a torrent of fire, enkindles the whole. See! see! how the conflagration rages,—spreads, prevails over all! The forests are in a blaze, and the mountains are wrapt in flame. Cities, kingdoms, continents, sink in the burning deluge. London, Britain, Europe, are no more. Through all the receptacles of water, through all the tracts of land, through

the extent of air, nothing is discernible, but one vast, prodigious, fiery ruin.—Where now are the treasures of the covetous? where the possessions of the mighty? where the delights of the voluptuary? How wise, how happy are they, whose portion is lodged in heavenly mansions! Their inheritance is incorruptible and undefiled; such as the last fire cannot reach, nor the dissolution of nature impair.

But see! the azure vault cleaves; the expanse of heaven is rolled back like a scroll; and the Judge, the Judge appears! “He cometh,” cries a mighty seraph, the herald of his approach, “he cometh to judge the world in righteousness, and minister true judgment unto the people!”—He cometh not as formerly, in the habit of a servant, but clad with uncreated glory, and magnificently attended with the armies of heaven. Angels and archangels stand before him, and ten thousand times ten thousand of those celestial spirits minister unto him.—Behold him, ye faithful followers of the Lamb; and wonder and love. This is he, who bore all your iniquities on the ignominious cross. This is he, who fulfilled all righteousness for the justification of your persons.—Behold him, ye despisers of his grace; and wonder and perish. This is he, whose merciful overtures you have contemned, and on whose precious blood you have trampled.

The great “white throne;”* beyond description august and formidable, is erected. The King of heaven, the Lord of glory, takes his seat on the dreadful tribunal. Mercy, on his right hand, displays the olive branch of peace, and holds forth the crown of righteousness. Justice, on his left hand, poises the impartial scale, and unsheathes the sword of vengeance. While Wisdom and Holiness, brighter than ten thousand suns, beam in his divine aspect—What are the preceding events, to this new scene of dignity and awe? The peals of thunder, sounding in the archangel’s trumpet; the blaze of a burning world, and the strong con-

* Rev. xx. 11.

Terrors of the day of judgment.

vulsion of expiring nature; the unnumbered myriads of human creatures, starting into instantaneous existence, and thronging the astonished skies; all these seem familiar incidents, compared with the appearance of the incarnate Jehovah.—Amazement, more than amazement, is all around. Terror and glory unite in their extremes. From the sight of his majestic eye, from the unsupportable splendours of his face, the earth itself and the very heavens “flee away.”*—How then? oh! how shall the ungodly stand? stand in his angry presence, and draw near to this consuming fire?

Yet draw near they must, and take their trial,—their decisive trial at his righteous bar. Every action comes under examination. For each idle word they must give account. Not so much as a secret thought escapes this exact scrutiny.—How shall the criminals, the impenitent criminals, either conceal their guilt, or elude the sentence? They have to do with a sagacity too keen to be deceived, with a power too strong to be resisted, and (O! terrible, terrible consideration) with a severity of most just displeasure, that will never relent, never be entreated more.—What ghastly despair lowers on their pale looks! What racking agonies rend their distracted hearts! The bloody axe and the torturing wheel, are ease, are down, compared with their prodigious woe. And (O holy God! wonderful in thy doings! fearful in thy judgments!) even this prodigious woe is the gentlest of visitations, compared with that indignation and wrath, which are hanging over their guilty heads; which are even now falling on all the sons of rebellion; which will plunge them deep in aggravated and endless destruction.

And is there a last day? and must there come
A sure, a fix'd irrevocable doom?

“Surely then,” to use the words of a pious prelate,†
“It should be the main care of our lives and deaths,
what shall give us peace and acceptation before the

* Rev. xx. 11.

† Bishop Hall.

dreadful tribunal of God. What but righteousness? What righteousness, or whose? Our's, or Christ's? Our's, in the inherent graces wrought in us, in the holy works wrought by us; or Christ's, in his most perfect obedience, and meritorious satisfaction, wrought for us, and applied to us? The popish faction is for the former. We protestants are for the latter. God is as direct on our side, as his word can make him; every where blazoning the defects of our own righteousness, every where extolling the perfect obedience of our Redeemer's."

"Behold!" says the everlasting King, "I lay in Zion, for a foundation, a stone; a tried stone; a precious corner stone; a sure foundation: He that believeth shall not make haste."* As this text contains so noble a display of our Saviour's consummate ability for his great work; as it is admirably calculated to preserve the mind from distressing fears, and to settle it in a steady tranquillity; you will give me leave to touch it cursorily with my pen; just as I should descant upon it in conversation, was I now sitting in one of your agreeable arbours, and enjoying your more agreeable company.

How beautiful the gradation! how lively the description! and how very important the practical improvement! or, I might say, the inscription which is engraven on this wonderful stone.—"Behold!" Intended to rouse and fix our most attentive regard. The God of heaven speaks. He speaks, and every syllable is balm; every sentence is rich with consolation. If ever therefore we have ears to hear, let it be to this Speaker, and on this occasion.

"A stone." Every thing else is sliding sand; is yielding air; is a breaking bubble. Wealth will prove a vain shadow; honour an empty breath; pleasure a delusory dream; our own righteousness a spider's web. If on these we rely, disappointment must ensue, and shame be inevitable. Nothing but Christ,

* Isa. xxviii. 16.

the only sure foundation.

nothing but Christ, can stably support our spiritual interest, and realize our expectation of true happiness. And blessed be the divine goodness! he is, for this purpose, not a stone only, but

“A tried stone.” Tried, in the days of his humanity, by all the vehemence of temptations, and all the weight of afflictions; yet, like gold from the furnace, rendered more shining and illustrious by the fiery scrutiny.—Tried, under the capacity of a Saviour, by millions and millions of depraved, wretched, ruined creatures; who have always found him perfectly able, and as perfectly willing, to expiate the most enormous guilt; to deliver from the most inveterate corruptions; and save, to the very utmost, all that come unto God through him.

“A corner stone:” which not only sustains, but unites the edifice; incorporating both Jews and Gentiles, believers of various languages, and manifold denominations: here in one harmonious bond of brotherly love; hereafter in one common participation of eternal joy.

“A precious stone.” More precious than rubies; the pearl of great price; and the desire of all nations. Precious with regard to the divine benignity of his person, and the unequalled excellency of his mediatorial offices. In these and in all respects, greater than Jonah,—wiser than Solomon,—fairer than the children of men,—chiefest among ten thousand,—and, to the awakened sinner, or enlightened believer, “altogether lovely.”*

“A sure foundation:”† such as no pressure can shake; equal, more than equal to every weight; even to sin, the heaviest load in the world.—“The Rock of ages;” such as never has failed, never will fail, those humble penitents, who cast their burden upon the Lord Redeemer; who roll‡ all their guilt, and fix

* Cant. v. 16.

† Fundamentum fundatissimum.

‡ Roll—This is the exact sense of the sacred phrase גַּל אֶל יְדוּהָהּ
Psa. xxii. 8. xxxvii. 5. Prov. xvi. 3. I am not ignorant, that some

The true believer shall stand unappalled

their whole hopes, on this immoveable basis.—Or, as the words may be rendered, a foundation! a foundation!* There is a fine spirit of vehemency in the sentence, thus understood. It speaks the language of exultation, and expresses an important discovery. That which mankind infinitely want; that which multitudes seek, and find not; it is here! it is here! This, this is the foundation for their pardon, their peace, their eternal felicity.

“Whosoever believeth,” though pressed with adversities, or surrounded by dangers, shall not make haste:† but, free from tumultuous and perplexing

people have presumed to censure, and many have been shy of using, this bold and vigorous metaphor; which nevertheless appears to me, of all others, the most just, the most significant, and therefore the most truly beautiful.

A burden that is manageable and comparatively light, we cast, we throw. But that which is extremely ponderous and quite unwieldy, we move only by rolling. Accordingly stones of an enormous size are called, by the oriental writers, stones of rolling, Ezra v. 8.—Consider the expression in this view, and represent, with greater or with equal energy, that prodigious load, which, heavier than the sand of the sea, oppresses the guilty conscience.—By substituting any other word, we enfeeble and dilute the sense; we lose the capital and striking idea.

Vain man would be wise. Let him not then, for the credit of his ingenuity, adventure to correct the language of omniscience. This, if any thing in nature, is

Periculosæ plenum opus alexæ.

This will be sure to discover, not his fine taste, but his grovelling apprehension, and his rampant pride. To improve, with the painter's brush, the glowing colours of the rainbow; to heighten, by fuller's soap, the lustre of the new fallen snow; would be a more modest attempt, and a much easier task, than to make an index expurgatory, or a table of errata, when the Spirit of inspiration dictates.

* מוסר מוסר

† Shall not make haste, לא וחיִשׁ This metaphorical expression, though it may be very intelligible to an Hebrew, is, to an English reader, like some fine picture placed in a disadvantageous light. We may possibly illustrate the prophet's meaning, and exemplify his assertion, if we compare the conduct of Moses, with that of the Israelites, on viewing the fatal catastrophe of Dathan and Abiram.—When the earth trembled under their feet; when the ground opened its horrid jaws; when the presumptuous sinners went down alive into

amidst the dissolution of all things.

thoughts, preserved from rash and precipitate steps, he shall possess his patience; knowing the sufficiency of those merits, and the fidelity of that grace, on which he has reposed his confidence, shall quietly and without perturbation wait for an expected end.—And not only amidst the perilous or disastrous changes of life, but even in the day of everlasting judgment, such persons shall stand with boldness.—They shall look up to the grand Arbitrator,—look round on all the solemnity of his appearance,—look forward to the unalterable sentence,—and neither feel anxiety, nor fear damnation.

Such, in that day of terrors, shall be seen
 To face the thunders with a godlike mien.
 The planets drop; their thoughts are fix'd above:
 The centre shakes; their hearts disdain to move.

This portion of scripture, which, I hope, will both delight and edify my friend, recalls our attention to the subject of my present letter; to those propitiatory sufferings, and that justifying righteousness, which, imputed to sinners, are the ground of their comfort, and the bulwark of their security.—And what say the writers of the New Testament upon this point? they, whose understandings were opened by the “Wonderful Counsellor,” to discern the meaning of the ancient oracles; who must therefore be the most competent judges of their true import, and our surest guides in settling their sense.—Do they patronize our interpretation of the prophets? do they set their seal to the authenticity of our doctrine?

the pit; when the tremendous chasm closed upon the screaming wretches; the children of Israel, it is written, “fled at the cry of them; fled in wild and hasty confusion: for they said, Lest the earth swallow us up also.”—But Moses, who denounced the dreadful doom; Moses, who was sure of the divine protection; Moses made no such precipitate or disorderly haste. He stood calm and composed; saw the whole alarming transaction, without any uneasy emotions of fear; or any unnecessary attempts to escape. So that his behaviour seems to be a clear and apposite comment on Isaiah’s phrase. See Numb. xvi.

St. Luke, in his ecclesiastical history, has preserved this weighty declaration of the apostles; "We believe, that through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, we shall be saved even as they."* Here the thing is implied.—St. Peter, in the introduction to one of his theological epistles, thus addresses his happy correspondents: "To them that have obtained like precious faith, in the righteousness† of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ." Here the point is expressly asserted.—With equal clearness is the doctrine delivered by Matthew the evangelist; "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness."‡ What can the "kingdom of God" mean? An experience of the power, and an enjoyment of the privileges of the gospel. What are we to understand by "his righteousness?" Surely, the righteousness which is worthy of this grand appellation, and peculiar to that blessed institution.

Would we learn what is the great and distinguishing peculiarity of the gospel? St. Paul informs us, "Therein the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith." As this text leads us into the epistle to the Romans;—as this epistle is, for the propriety of its method, as well as for the importance of its doctrine, singularly excellent,—it may not be amiss to examine its structure, and inquire into its design.

The apostle writes to a promiscuous people; who had been converted, partly from Judaism, partly from Gentilism. His aim is, to strike at the very root of their former errors respectively; to turn them wholly to the superabundant grace of God, and establish them solely on the all-sufficient merits of Christ.

* Acts xv. 11.

† 2 Pet. i. 1. The phrase is *πιστιν εν δικαιοσυνη*. If we retain the common translation, it proves another very momentous truth: "that the righteousness of our God, even of our Saviour Jesus Christ," is the one meritorious procuring cause of all spiritual blessings; of faith, as well as of fruition: of grace, as well as of glory.

‡ Matt. vi. 33.

demonstrated from the New Testament.

The Gentiles were for the most part, grossly ignorant of God, and stupidly negligent of invisible interests. If any among them had a sense of religion; their virtues, they imagined, were meritorious of all that the Deity could bestow. If they fell into sin; sin, they supposed, might easily be obliterated by repentance, or compensated by a train of sacrifices.* A few of their judicious sages taught, that the most probable means of securing the divine favour, was a sincere reformation of life.

The Jews, it is well known, placed a mighty dependence on their affinity to Abraham, and the covenant made with their fathers; on their adherence to the letter of the moral law, and their scrupulous performance of ceremonial institutions:—Gentiles and Jews agreeing in this mistake, that they looked for the pardon of guilt, and the attainment of happiness, from some service done, or some qualities acquired by themselves.

Against these errors the zealous apostle draws his pen. He enters the lists like a true champion of Christ, in the most spirited and heroic manner ina-

* See Witsii *Animadversiones Irenica*, cap. vii.—A choice little piece of polemical divinity; perhaps the very best that is extant. In which the most important controversies are fairly stated, accurately discussed, and judiciously determined; with a perspicuity of sense, and a solidity of reasoning, exceeded by nothing, but the remarkable conciseness, and the still more remarkable candour of the sentiments.

The *Oeconomia Fœderum*, written by the same hand, is a body of divinity; in its method so well digested; in its doctrines so truly evangelical; and (what is not very usual with our systematic writers) in its language so refined and elegant, in its manner so affectionate and animating, that I would venture to recommend it to every young student in divinity. I would not scruple to risk all my reputation upon the merits of this performance; and cannot but lament it, as one of my greatest losses, that I was no sooner acquainted with this most excellent author.—All whose works have such a delicacy of composition, and such a sweet savour of holiness, that I know not any comparison more proper to represent their true character, than the golden pot which had manna; and was—outwardly bright with burnished gold—inwardly, rich with heavenly food.

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ginable. "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ:" for, however it may be deemed foolishness by the polite Greeks, or prove a stumbling block to the carnal Jews, "it is the power of God unto salvation;"* it is the grand instrument, which he has ordained for this blessed purpose, and which he will certainly crown with the desired success.—Whence has the gospel this very peculiar power? Because therein a righteousness is revealed; a true and perfect righteousness, which obliterates all guilt, and furnishes a solid title to eternal life.—What righteousness is this? The righteousness, not of man, but of God; which was promised by God in the scriptures, was introduced by God in the person of his Son; and, on account of its consummate excellency, is both acceptable and available in his sight.

This righteousness is "from faith to faith;"† held forth, as it were, by a promising God, and apprehended by a believing soul; who, first, gives a firm assent to the gospel; then, cordially accepts its blessings; from a conviction that the doctrine is true, passes to a persuasion that the privileges are his own.—When this is effected, a foundation is laid for all happiness; a principle is wrought to produce all holiness.

But why was it requisite, that such a righteousness should be provided by God, and revealed in the gospel?—Because both Gentile and Jew neither possessed, nor could attain, any righteousness of their own; and this righteousness, though so absolutely necessary for their fallen state, was infinitely remote from all human apprehensions. The latter assertion is self-evident. The former is particularly demonstrated.—First, with regard to the Gentiles; the generality of whom were abandoned to the most scandalous excesses; and they who had escaped the grosser pollutions, fell short in the duties of natural religion.—Next, with regard to the Jews; many of

* Rom. i. 16.

† Rom. i. 17.

demonstrated from the New Testament.

whom lived in open violation of the external commandment: and not one of them acted up to the internal purity required by the Mosaic precepts.—From which premises, this conclusion is deduced, that each of them had transgressed even their own rule of action; that all of them were, on this account, utterly inexcusable: therefore, by the works of the law, whether dictated by reason, or delivered by Moses, “no mortal can be justified”* in the sight of God.

Lest any should imagine, that righteousness may be obtained, if not by a conformity to the law of nature, or the law of Moses, yet by an observation of evangelical ordinances; he farther declares, that sinners are justified freely, without any regard to their own endowments; “through the redemption, the complete redemption of Jesus Christ:”† after such a manner, as may bring life and salvation to their souls, while all the glory reverts to God the Father, and his Son Jesus Christ.

In the prosecution of this very momentous subject, our sacred disputant removes an objection, which is as common, as it is plausible. “Do we make void the law through faith?” Do we render it a vain institution; such as never has been, never will be fulfilled?—God forbid! This was a flagrant dishonour to the divine Legislator and his holy commandments; such as we would abhor, rather than countenance.—On the contrary, “we establish the law;”‡ not only as we receive it for a rule of life, but we expect no salvation without a proper, without a perfect conformity to its

* Rom. iii. 20. There seems to be a kind of humbling or degrading turn in the apostle’s language, *παρα σαρκί*, which may possibly be preserved in the translation, *no mortal*.—We may farther observe the very nice and exact manner of the sacred argumentation. Lest it should be said, and from the authority of St. James, a man is justified by works: our unerring writer tacitly allows, that before men this is practicable, before men this is proper; but not *εμπροσθ αυτου*, not before God.

† Rom. iii. 34.

‡ Rom. iii. 31. An incontestible proof, that the apostle treats of the moral law.

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injunctions.—How can this be effected? By qualifying its sense, and softening it into an easier system. This were to vacate the law; to deprive it of its honours; and hinder it from attaining the due end, either of obedience or condemnation. No; but we establish the law, by believing in that great Mediator, who has obeyed its every precept; sustained its whole penalty; and satisfied all its requirements, in their utmost extent.

Farther to corroborate his scheme, he proves it from the renowned examples of Abraham and David.—The instance of Abraham is so clear, that it wants no comment. Any paraphrase would rather obscure, than illustrate it.—The other, derived from the testimony of the psalmist, may admit the commentator's tool: yet not to hammer it into a new form, but only to clear the rubbish; to rescue it from misrepresentation, and place it in a true light. "Even as David describeth the blessedness of the man, to whom God imputeth righteousness without works, saying, Blessed are they, whose unrighteousness is forgiven, and whose sins are covered: blessed is the man, to whom the Lord will not impute sin."*—Here is imputation asserted; the imputation of righteousness; of righteousness without works: without any respect to, or any cooperation from, any kind of human work. It is a blessing vouchsafed to the ungodly; not founded on a freedom from sin, but procuring a remission of its guilt.

Some, I know, have attempted to resolve all the force of this passage, into an argument for the sameness of pardon and justification. Whereas the apostle undertakes to prove, not that forgiveness and justification are identically the same, but that both are absolutely free. To maintain which position, he argues, "This doctrine is as true, as it is comfortable. It agrees with the experience, and has received the attestation of David. When he speaks of the blessed and happy man, he describes him, not as an innocent, but guilty

* Rom. iv. 6, 7.

demonstrated from the New Testament.

person; not as having any claim to the divine favour, on account of deserving performances, or recommending properties; but as owing all his acceptance to that sovereign grace, which forgives iniquities, and blots out sin. Such is the case with regard to that evangelical justification which we preach. Even as it is, in the manner of vouchsafement, perfectly similiar to the blessedness celebrated by the psalmist."—The apostle's eye is not so directly upon the nature of the privilege, as upon the freeness with which it is granted. Nor can any infer from the tenor of his reasoning, that to be forgiven is to be justified; only that both are acts of infinitely rich mercy, designed for sinners, promised to sinners; bestowed on sinners: who have nothing, nothing of their own either to boast, or to plead.

In the fifth chapter, from verse the twelfth to the end, the sacred penman points out the cause, and explains the method of justification. Of which this is the sum:—That Christ, in pursuance of the covenant of grace, fulfilled all righteousness in the stead of his people: That this righteousness, being performed for them, is imputed to them: That, by virtue of this gracious imputation, they are absolved from guilt, and entitled to bliss; as thoroughly absolved, and as fully entitled, as if in their own persons they had undergone the expiatory sufferings, and yielded the meritorious obedience.—Lest it should seem strange, in the opinion of a Jew or a Gentile, to hear of being justified by the righteousness of another, the wary apostle urges a parallel case, recorded in the Jewish revelation, but ratified by universal experience;* namely, our being condemned for the unrighteousness of another.—In this respect, he observes, Adam was a type of our Lord; or "a figure of him that was to come."† The relations the same, but the effects happily reversed. Adam

* By the pains and death which infants, in every nation, endure; which are unquestionably punishments, and to which they are doomed by the righteous judgment of God.

† Rom. v. 14.

the head of his posterity; Christ the head of his people. Adam's sin was imputed to all his natural descendants; Christ's righteousness is imputed to all his spiritual offspring. Adam's transgression brought death into the world, and all our woe; Christ's obedience brings life, and all our happiness.*—The whole closes with this very obvious, and no less weighty inference; "Therefore as, by the offence of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so, by the righteousness of one, the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life."†

I do not recollect any other similitude, which the apostle so minutely sifts, and so copiously unfolds. He explains it; he applies it; he resumes it; he dwells upon it; and scarcely knows how to desist from it. I am sure, you will not blame me, if I imitate the sacred author; revert to the subject, and quote another passage from the same paragraph.—"Much more shall they who receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness, reign in life by one, Jesus Christ."‡—Here, I am ready to think, the inspired writer puts a difference between the two grand blessings purchased by Emmanuel, remission and righteousness.§ For who are the persons which receive abundance of grace? They, I apprehend, that having sinned much, have much forgiven.—Who are the persons which receive abundance of the gift of righteousness? They that, having in their own conduct wrought out none, which will bear the test of God's impartial scrutiny, have one placed to their account, which the all-seeing eye of heaven approves.—However, whether the distinction I

* *Quemadmodum peccatum Adami, says Bengelius, sine peccatis quæ postea commisimus, mortem attulit nobis; sic justitia Christi, sine bonis operibus, quæ deinceps a nobis fiunt, vitam nobis conciliat. That is, As the sin of Adam, without any concurrence of the sins which we ourselves respectively commit, occasioned our ruin; so the righteousness of Christ, abstracted from all consideration of our personal obedience, procures our recovery.*

† Rom. v. 18.

‡ Rom. v. 17.

§ *Non tantum peccata sublata, sed justitia præstita.*

demonstrated from the New Testament.

have ventured to propose, be fanciful or substantial, of this I am persuaded, that the gift of righteousness* must signify a righteousness, not originally their own, but another's; not what they themselves have acquired, but what was fulfilled by their Surety; and is, by an act of heavenly indulgence, consigned over to them. Accordingly, it is represented, not as a work, but as a gift; and those who are interested in it, are styled not workers, but receivers.

I should but faintly copy the apostolic example, if I did not once again avail myself of this important topic. Suffer me, therefore, to transcribe one more verse from this admirable chapter. "As by the disobedience of one man many were made sinners; so, by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous."†—The disobedience of one is the disobedience of Adam; his actual transgression of the divine law. Hereby many were made sinners; sinners, in such a sense, as to become obnoxious unto condemnation and death.—All this, I think, is, from the apostle's own words, indisputable. And if we would preserve the propriety

* I cannot but wonder at the assertion of a late writer, who roundly declares, "That there is not one word in this whole chapter relating to the antecedent obedience of Christ's life, but expressing only his passive obedience.—Must then this group of expressions—δικαιοσυνη—δικαιωμα—υπακοη—be confined barely to the sufferings of our Lord? To put such a sense upon the words of the apostle, is, according to my apprehension, not to hear his voice but to gag his mouth; not to acquiesce in the sacred oracles, but to make them speak our own meaning.—Beza, who perhaps is inferior to no critic with regard to a masterly skill in the Greek language, thus explains δικαιωμα; Justificationis est materia, nempe Christi obedientia; cujus imputatio nos justos facit.—Mintert, in his accurate and copious lexicon of the Greek Testament, gives this interpretation of δικαιοσυνη: Opera Christo a patre præscripta hoc nomine venient; nimiram omni quæ ab ipso præstanda erant, tam ad legis divinæ impletionem, quam ad generis humani redemptionem: quæ nobis imputata, et per fidem accepta, faciunt, ut eorum Deo justificeamur.—And as for υπακοη, surely that cannot, without the utmost violence to its native signification, be so applied to the passive, as to exclude the active obedience. The contrary notion, if an artful disputant should espouse it, might appear somewhat plausible; but this has not the least air of probability.

† Rom. v. 19.

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of his antithesis, or the force of his reasoning, we must allow that the obedience of one is the obedience of Christ; his actual and complete performance of the whole law. Hereby many are made righteous: righteous in such a sense, as to be released from condemnation, and vested with a title to life eternal.—How clear and easy is this meaning! how just and regular this argumentation! What subtlety of evasion must be used, to give a different turn to the instructive text!

This is the most consistent sense in which I can understand, Rom. viii. 5. “That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit:” That the righteousness required by the holy but broken law, might be thoroughly accomplished; accomplished by our public Representative, and in our human nature; so as to be deemed, in point of legal estimation, fulfilled for us and by us.* This, I say, is most consistent with the tenor of St. Paul’s arguing, and with the exact import of his language.—With the tenor of his arguing: for he undertakes to demonstrate the impossibility of our justification, by any personal conformity to the law. Whereas, if we could satisfy its penalty, and obey its precepts, or, in other words, fulfil its righteousness; this impossibility would cease.—With the exact import of his language: for the original phrase denotes, not a sincere, but a complete obedience; not what we are enabled to perform, but what the law has a right† to demand. Which every one must acknowledge, is not

* It is remarked by a judicious critic, and very valuable expositor, that the preposition *εἰς* sometimes signifies by or for; and is so translated, Matt. v. 34. Heb. i. 1. See Dr. Guyse’s exposition of the New Testament.

† It may be worth our while to observe, that St. Paul, when treating on this subject, uses three distinct words, all derived from the same original.—*δικαιοσύνη*, which expresses justification; the accounting or declaring a person righteous.—*δικαιοσύνη*, which never signifies justification, but righteousness either performed by us, or imputed to us.—*δικαιώμα*, the phrase which occurs in this place, and denotes the right or demand of the law; as that which is indispensably necessary to the justification of man.

demonstrated from the New Testament.

fulfilled in any mere man since the fall; but was fulfilled by Jesus Christ, for our good, and in our stead.—This interpretation preserves the sentences distinct, and makes a very natural introduction for the following clause; where the persons interested in this privilege, are described by their fruits, “who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit:” implying that justification and sanctification are, like the ever corresponding motion of our eyes, inseparable concomitants; and we vainly pretend to the former, if we continue destitute of the latter.

We have produced positive proofs of our doctrine. We have heard an apostle declaring the assured happiness, and complete justification of true believers.—Let us now observe the same sagacious judge of men and things, discovering the danger of those self-justiciaries, who reject the Redeemer’s righteousness.

He is filled with the darkest apprehensions, concerning his brethren the Jews. He is impressed with melancholy presages, relating to their eternal state.*—What was the cause of this tender solicitude? Had they cast off all religion, and given themselves over to gross immoralities? On the contrary, they were worshippers of the true God; and had in their way, not only a regard, but a zeal for his honour.†—Wherefore then does this compassionate father in Israel, feel the same trembling uneasiness, for his kinsmen according to the flesh, as Eli felt for the endangered ark? Himself assigns the reason: Because “they being ignorant of God’s righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves to the righteousness of God.”‡ Not knowing that immaculate holiness, which the perfect nature, and equally perfect law of the most high God, require;—being wilfully ignorant of that consummate obedience, which an incarnate God vouchsafed to perform, for the justification of his people;—they sedulously, but foolishly endeavoured, to establish their

* Rom. ix. 2.

† Rom. x. 2.

‡ Rom. x. 3.

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own righteousness; to make it, scanty and decrepit as it was, the basis of their hopes.—Thus were they resting their everlasting *all* on a bottom, not precarious only, but irreparably ruinous. A boundless eternity the fabric! yet they built (wonder, O heavens!) on the foam of the waters! and (which added stubbornness to their folly) in avowed contempt of that strong and sure foundation, laid by God's own hand in Zion.—For this the good apostle was afflicted, with “great heaviness and continual sorrow.” For this he made the prophet's pathetic complaint his own: “Oh! that my head were waters, and my eyes a fountain of tears, that I might bewail, day and night,”* the incorrigible perverseness of my people. “For my people have committed two evils;” in not thankfully submitting to the righteousness of God, “they have forsaken the fountain of living waters;” in attempting to establish their own righteousness, “they have hewed themselves out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water.”†

Having shewed their fatal error, he strengthens his representation, by displaying the happy success of the Gentiles.—What shall we say then? This, however improbable it may seem, we confidently affirm, “That the Gentiles, who followed not after righteousness,” who had no knowledge of it, and no concern about it; “even they have attained to righteousness.”‡—Strange assertion! How is this possible? Doubtless, the righteousness which they have attained, could not be any personal righteousness. Of this they were totally destitute. Instead of practising moral virtues, or religious duties, they were immersed in sensuality, and abandoned to idolatry. It must therefore be the

* Jer. ix. 1.

† Jer. ii. 13.

‡ Surely, this must signify more than “attaining to the profession of a religion, whereby they may be justified and saved.” To this multitudes attain, who continue, as the prophet speaks, “stout-hearted and far from righteousness,” who derive no real benefit from their profession; but are rendered utterly inexcusable, and liable to more aggravated condemnation.

demonstrated from the New Testament.

evangelical, the imputed righteousness, "even that which was wrought by Christ, and is received by faith."* Israel, in the mean time, the nominal Israel, who, with great pretensions to sanctity, and many costly oblations, "followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness." Attained! They have done something less. They are fallen vastly short of it; they are pronounced guilty by it; they stand condemned before it.†—Wherefore did they so grossly mistake, and so grievously miscarry? Because they forsook the good old way, in which Abraham, David, and their pious ancestors walked. They adopted a new scheme; and would fain have substituted their own; instead of relying on a Saviour's righteousness. "They sought for justification," not by faith, but as it were "by the works of the law."‡ A method which their fathers knew not; which their God ordained not: and which proved, as it always will prove, not only abortive, but destructive.—At this stone they stumbled; on

* Surely, the righteousness which is by faith, cannot consist "in humbly committing the soul to Christ, in the way that he hath appointed." According to this notion, the justifying righteousness would spring from ourselves; would be constituted by an act of our own, and not by the perfect obedience of our Lord.

I am sorry to see this, and the preceding interpretation, in the works of an expositor, whose learning I admire, whose piety I reverence, and whose memory I honour. Yet I must say, on this occasion, with one of the ancient philosophers, "*Amicus Plato, amicus Socrates, sed magis amica, veritas.*"

† This, I apprehend, is the purport of the apostle's speech, when he tells us, that his countrymen "had not attained unto the law of righteousness." He uses the figure *μειωσις* and means more than he expresses, somewhat like the dramatic poet, who says of certain literary pretenders.

Qui se primos esse rerum omnium existimant,
Nec tamen sunt.

That is, they are quite the reverse—Or like the apostle in the close of this chapter, who assures the believers in Jesus, "They shall not be ashamed:" that is, they shall be encouraged, emboldened, established.

‡ Rom. ix. 30, 31, 32.

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this rock they split. Let their ruin be a way-mark, and the apostle's observation a light-house to my Theron.

Our zealous writer tries every expedient. He mingles hope with terror. Having pointed out the rock on which the Israelites suffered shipwreck, he directs us to the haven, in which sinners may cast anchor, and find safety. He gives us a fine descriptive view of the christian's complete happiness. He opens (if I may continue the metaphor) a free and ample port for perishing souls; not formed by a neck of land, or a ridge of mountains, but by a magnificent chain of spiritual blessings. All proceeding from, and terminating in, that precious corner-stone Jesus Christ: "who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption;"* wisdom, to enlighten our ignorant minds; righteousness,† to justify our guilty persons; sanctification,‡ to renew our depraved natures; redemption, to rescue us from all evil, and render us, both in body and soul, perfectly and eternally happy,—Let it be remarked, how carefully our inspired writer sets aside all sufficiency, as well as all merit in man. He represents the whole of our salvation, both in its procurement and application, as a work of freest grace. Christ is, and not we ourselves, the author of this glorious restoration, the cause of this great felicity. He

* 1 Cor. i. 30.

† Righteousness and sanctification; the former imputed, the latter inherent. This preserves a distinction between the noble articles, and assigns to each a grand share in the economy of salvation.—To say, that if one of the blessings is communicated by way of imputation, the other should be communicated in the same manner, seems to be cavilling, rather than arguing: because the subjects are of a different nature, and therefore must be enjoyed in a different way.—The cocoa tree is, to the American, food and clothing, a habitation and domestic utensils. But must we suppose it administering to all these uses in one and the same unvaried method? Because in one respect it is eaten, in another it is wore, must it be thus applied in all? I believe, the illiterate savage, who enjoys the several gifts, need not be taught the absurdity of such a supposition,

demonstrated from the New Testament.

is made all this unto us.—How? Not by our own resolution and strength; but of God, by the agency of his mighty power, and blessed Spirit. He shews us the all-sufficient fulness of Christ. He brings us by ardent longings to Christ. He implants us into Christ, and makes us partakers of his merits.

In the process of the same epistle, the sacred penman enumerates the constituent parts of that great salvation, which the Son of God has procured for ruined sinners. “But ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.”* Ye are washed; cleansed from the filth, and discharged from the guilt of all your iniquities. Ye are sanctified; delivered from the death of sin, and endued with a living principle of holiness. Ye are justified; restored to a state of acceptance with God, and invested with a title to eternal glory. All which inestimable prerogatives are conferred upon the true believer, “in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ;” in consideration of his atoning blood, and meritorious righteousness. “By the Spirit of our God;” through the efficacy of his operation, revealing Christ, and working faith in the heart.

Some gentlemen have talked of a new remedial law; whereas the apostle declares. “that Christ is the end of the” old, the unalterable, the “Mosaic law, for righteousness to every one that believeth.”†—Follow the course of a river, it will constantly lead you to the ocean. Trace the veins of the body, they invariably unite in the heart. Mark likewise the tendency of the law, it no less constantly and invariably conducts you to Christ, as the centre of its views, and the consummation of its demands.

The moral law aims at discovering our guilt, and demonstrating our inexpressible need of a Saviour. The ceremonial points him out, as suffering in our stead, making reconciliation for iniquity, and purging away every defilement with his blood.—They

* 1 Cor. vi. 11.

† Rom. x. 1.

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both direct the wretched transgressor, to renounce himself, and fly to the Redeemer; who alone has paid that perfect obedience, and brought in that everlasting righteousness, which the sinner wants, and the law exacts; who is, therefore, the only proper accomplishment of the one, and the only suitable supply for the other.

What is the grand design of the whole scriptures? St. Paul, displaying their sublime origin, and enumerating the gracious purposes they are intended to serve, writes thus: "All scripture is given by inspiration of God; and is profitable—for doctrine, to declare and establish truth; for reproof, to convince of sin, and to refute error: for correction,* or renovation of the heart, and reformation of the life; for instruction in righteousness, in that righteousness, which could never have been learned from any other book, and in which sinful men may appear with comfort before their God.

We have seen the principal scope of the law, and the leading design of the scriptures; let us add one inquiry more. What is the chief office of the Spirit?—If all these coincide, and uniformly terminate in the imputed righteousness of Christ, we have a confirmation of its reality and excellence, great as man can desire, I had almost said, great as God can impart.—What says our Lord upon this point? "When he, the Spirit of truth is come, he shall convince† the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment. Of sin, because they believe not on me; of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more: of judgment, because the Prince of this world is judged."‡—Is it possible for words to be more

* Tim. iii. 16. Προς επανορθωσιν.

† He shall convince, seems to be the most proper translation of ελεγξει, as it implies the sure success, which attends the operation of the divine Spirit.—Man may reprove, and no conviction ensue, Whereas that almighty Agent not only reproveth, but reproveth with power; so as to determine the judgment, and sway the affections.

‡ John xvi. 8, 9, 10, 11:

demonstrated from the New Testament.

weighty and comprehensive? Here is a summary of christian faith, and christian holiness. Not that superficial holiness, which is patched up of devotional forms, and goes no farther than external performances; but that which is vital, and springs from the heart; consists in power, not in mere profession; whose praise, if not of men, who are smitten with pompous outsides, is sure to be of God, who distinguishes the things which are excellent.

“He shall convince the world of sin;” of original and actual sin. The sin of their nature, as well as the sin of their life; the sin of their best deeds, no less than of their criminal commissions, and blameable omissions. Above all, of their sinning against the sovereign, the only remedy, by unbelief; “because they believe not on me.”—He shall convince of righteousness; of the divine Redeemer’s righteousness, which the foregoing conviction must render peculiarly welcome; convince them, that it was wrought out in behalf of disobedient and defective mortals; that it is absolutely perfect and sufficient to justify even the most ungodly. Of all which an incontestible proof is given, by his resurrection from the dead, his triumphant ascension into heaven, and session at the right hand of his Father; “because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more.”*—He shall convince of judgment. Those who are humbled under a sense of guilt, and justified through an imputed righteousness, shall be taught by happy experience, that “the Prince of this world is condemned” and dethroned in their hearts; that their souls are rescued from the tyranny of Satan; are made victorious over their corruptions; and restored to the liberty,—the glorious liberty of the children of God.

You wonder, perhaps, that I have not strengthened

* For if the work had been imperfect in any degree, our Redeemer, instead of taking up his stated and final residence in the regions of glory, must have descended again into this inferior world, to complete what was deficient.

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my cause, by any quotation from the epistle to the Galatians. What I design, my dear Theron, is not to accumulate, but to select arguments. However, that I may not disappoint an expectation so reasonable, I proceed to lay before you a very nervous passage, from that masterly piece of sacred controversy.—Only let me just observe, that the epistle was written to persons who had embraced christianity, and professed an affiance in Christ; but would fain have joined circumcision, would fain have superadded their own religious duties, to the merits of their Saviour, in order to constitute, at least, some part of their justifying righteousness. Against which error, the vigilant and indefatigable assertor of the truth as it is in Jesus, remonstrates,—“ We who are Jews by nature, and not sinners of the Gentiles, knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ; that we may be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.”*

“ We who are Jews by nature,” the descendants of Abraham, and God's peculiar people; have the tables of the law, and the ordinances of his worship; we, who in point of privileges are greatly superior to the Gentile nations, and have all possible advantages for establishing (if such a thing were practicable) a righteousness of our own; what have we done?—“ We have believed on Jesus Christ;” we have renounced ourselves; disclaimed whatever is our own, and depended wholly on the righteousness of Christ.—For what end? That by this faith in Christ, which re-

* Gal. ii. 15, 16. Observable, very observable is the zeal of our apostle, in this determined stand against the most specious, and therefore the most dangerous, encroachments of error. To express his ardent concern for the truth and purity of the gospel, the works of the law are mentioned no less than three times, and as often excluded from the affair of justification. The faith of Christ likewise is thrice inculcated, and as often asserted to be the only method of becoming righteous before God.

demonstrated from the New Testament.

ceives his righteousness; pleads his righteousness; and presents nothing but his righteousness before the throne, "we might be justified."—What motive has induced us to this practice? A firm persuasion, that by "the works of the law," by sincere obedience, or personal holiness, "no man living has been, and no man living can be, justified before God."

Are you tired, Theron? have I fatigued your attention, instead of convincing your judgment?—I will not harbour such a suspicion.—It is pleasing to converse with those, who have travelled into foreign countries, and seen the wonders of creation. We hearken to their narratives with delight. Every new adventure whets our curiosity, rather than palls our appetite. Must it not then afford a more sublime satisfaction to be entertained with the discourses of a person, who had, not indeed sailed round the world, but made a journey to the third heavens? who had been admitted into the paradise of God, and heard things of infinite importance, and unutterable dignity?—This was the privilege of that incomparable man, whose observations and discoveries I have been presenting to my friend. And I promise myself, he will not complain of weariness, if I enrich my epistle with one or two more of those glorious truths. "God hath made him to be sin for us who knew no sin, that we might," not be put into a capacity of acquiring a righteousness of our own; but "be made the righteousness of God in him."* In this text, the double imputation of our sin to Christ, and of Christ's righteousness to us, is most emphatically taught, and most charmingly contrasted.—Most emphatically taught. For we are said, not barely to be righteous, but to be made righteousness itself; and not righteousness only, but (which is the utmost that language can reach) the righteousness of God.—Most charmingly contrasted. For one cannot but ask, in what manner Christ was made sin? In the very same manner we are made righteousness.

* 2 Cor. v. 21.

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Christ knew no actual sin; yet, upon his mediatorial interposition in our behalf, he was treated by divine justice, as a sinful person. We likewise are destitute of all legal righteousness; yet upon our receiving Christ, and believing in his name, we are regarded by the divine Majesty as righteous creatures. This therefore cannot, in either case, be intrinsically; but must be, in both instances, imputatively.—Gracious, divinely gracious exchange!* pregnant with amazing goodness, and rich with inestimable benefits. The incessant triumph of the strong, the sovereign consolation of the weak believer?

Cease your exultations, cries one, and come down from your altitudes. The term used in this verse denotes, not so properly sin, as an offering for sin.—This is a mere proposal, which I may as reasonably deny, as another affirm. Since the word occurs much more frequently in the former signification, than in the latter; and since, by giving it the latter signification in the passage before us, we very much impair, if not totally destroy, the apostle's beautiful antithesis.

However, not to contend, but to allow the remark; I borrow my reply from a brave old champion for the truths of the gospel:† “This text,” says he, “invincibly proveth, that we are not justified in God's sight

* Ita scilicet mirabili permutatione mala nostra in se recipit, ut bona sua nobis largiretur: recipit miseriam, largiretur misericordiam; recipit maledictionem, ut benedictionis suæ compotes nos faceret; recipit mortem ut vitam conferret; recipit peccatum, ut justitiam impertiretur. Thus writes the judicious Turretine. To which, in concurrence with the accurate Witsius, I subscribe both with hand and heart.

† See Dr. Fulk's annotation on the place, in that valuable piece of ancient controversy and criticism, the Examination of the Rhemish Testament. Which, though not altogether so elegant and refined in the language, nor so delicate and genteel in the manner, as might be wished, is nevertheless full of sound divinity, weighty arguments, and important observations.—Would the young student be taught to discover the very sinews of popery, and be able to give an effectual blow to that complication of errors, I scarce know a treatise better calculated for the purpose.

demonstrated from the New Testament.

by righteousness inherent in us, but by the righteousness of Christ imputed to us through faith." After which he adds, what I make my answer to the objection; "That Christ was made sin for us, because he was a sacrifice for sin, we confess; but therefore was he a sacrifice for sin, because our sin was imputed to him, and punished in him."—The poor delinquents under the Mosaic dispensation, who brought their sin-offering to the altar of the Lord, were directed to lay their hand on the devoted beast; signifying, by this usage, the transferring of guilt from the offerer to the sacrifice. Conformably to the import of this ceremony, Christ assumed our demerit; like a true peculiar victim, suffered the punishment, which we had deserved; and which, without such a commutation, we must have undergone. So that our Lord's being made a sin-offering for us, does by no means invalidate, but very much confirm our doctrine. It necessarily implies the translation of our iniquity to his person; and, on the principles of analogy, must infer the imputation of his righteousness to our souls.

One passage more permit me to transcribe into my paper; and, at the same time, to wish that it may be written on both our hearts; written, not with ink and pen, no, nor with the point of a diamond, but with the finger of the living God. "Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord; for whom I have suffered the loss of all things; and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in him; not having mine own righteousness which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God through faith.*

Be pleased to observe, that in this confession of faith, and with reference to the case of justification, the apostle renounces all those acts of supposed righ-

* Phil. iii. 8, 9.

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teousness, which were antecedent to his conversion.—Nor does he repudiate them only, but all those more excellent services, by which he was so eminently distinguished, even after his attachment to Christ, and engagement in the christian ministry. As though he should say, “The privilege of being a Hebrew by birth; the prerogative of being a pharisee by profession; together with a behaviour exemplary, and a reputation unblameable; all these, which was once reckoned my highest gain, as soon as I became acquainted with the glorious perfections of Christ, I counted loss for him.*—And now, though I have been a disciple many years; have walked in all holy conversation and godliness; have endured, for my divine Master's name, tribulations above measure; have laboured more abundantly, and more successfully than all the apostles; yet even these and all other attainments, or what kind or of what date soever, I count but loss, † for the transcendent excellency of Christ Jesus our Lord.—Yea, doubtless, ‡ it is my deliberate and stedfast resolution; what I have most seriously adopted, and do publicly avow, that specious as all these acquirements may seem, and valuable as they may be in other respects, I reckon them but dung, that I may win Christ.§ They fade into nothing, they dwindle into

* Ηγήμαι, I have counted.

† Ηθυμαι, relates to the present time, and comprehends present attainments. I do count—not some, or the greatest part, but all things. What? Is a course of sobriety, and the exercise of morality, to be reckoned as dung? All things, says the apostle.—What? Is our most elevated devotion, and enlarged obedience, to be degraded at this monstrous rate? All things, says the apostle. This is his invariable reply. And we may venture to affirm, that he had the mind of Christ.

‡ Perhaps *αλλα μουνουσι* may be translated, *but truly*. As if he had said, “But why should I mention any more particulars? In truth, I count all things, &c.”

§ Δια Χριστην—δια το υπιρεχον—ινα Χριστον κερδησω—plainly imply this comparative or relative sense. Virtues, which are the fruits of the Spirit, and labours, which are a blessing to mankind, must not be reckoned absolutely or in all respects despicable; but only in a

demonstrated from the New Testament.

less than nothing, if set in competition with his matchless obedience; and were they to supersede my application to his merits, or weaken my reliance on his mediation, they would not be contemptible only, but injurious.—Irreparably injurious,—loss itself.”

You will ask, if he reject all his own righteousness, on what are his hopes fixed?—On a foundation extensive as the obedience of the Redeemer's life and death, unshaken as the dignity of his eternal power and Godhead. They are fixed on “the righteousness which is of God;” the righteousness which God the Father, in unsearchable wisdom, provided; and which God the Son, in unutterable goodness, wrought.—Do you inquire, how he came to be invested with this righteousness? The answer is ready and satisfactory. It was by the application of the divine Spirit; and the instrumentality of faith. Lest any should imagine, that this faith might be substituted instead of his own obedience to the law, he puts an apparent difference between the righteousness which justifies, and the faith by which it is received; not the righteousness which consists in, but is through the faith of Christ.—To shew the great importance of this distinction, how earnestly he insisted upon it as a preacher, how much it tended to his consolation as a christian, he repeats the sentiment, he reindulcates the doctrine, “the righteousness which is of God by faith.”

Will you now, Theron, or shall I, poor unprofitable creatures, presume to rely on any performances or any accomplishments of our own? When that dis-

limited and qualified acceptation; despicable, not in themselves, but as compared with the divinely perfect righteousness of Christ, or as referred to the infinitely important articles of justification.

That Aspasio, in this whole paragraph, speaks the sense of our church, will appear from the following extract:—“For the apostle St. Paul saith, He doth glory, in what? in the contempt of his own righteousness; and that he looketh for the righteousness of God by faith.”—*Homily on Salvation*, part II.

The reasons which determined Aspasio

tinguished saint,—a perfect prodigy of gifts, of graces, and of zeal,—indefatigable in labours, unconquerable by afflictions, and of whose usefulness there is neither measure nor end;—when he denies himself in every view; depreciates all; disavows all; and makes mention of nothing, but the incomparable righteousness of his “obedient, dying, interceding Saviour?”

What shall I say more; shall I attempt to play rhetorician, and borrow the insinuating arts of persuasion? This, after all the cogent testimonies produced, and all the great authorities urged, would be a needless parade. When our pen is a sun-beam, there is but little occasion to dip it in oil.

Instead of such an attempt, give me leave to make a frank and honest confession. I would conceal nothing from my friend. He should have a sash to my breast; throw it up at his pleasure, and see all that passes within.—Though I never had any temptation to that pernicious set of errors, which passes under the character of Socinianism; yet I had many searchings of heart, and much solicitous inquiry, how far we are indebted to Christ’s active righteousness. Thoroughly persuaded, that “other foundation can no man lay, save that which is laid, even Jesus Christ;”* and that “there is no other name given under heaven, whereby men can be saved;”† yet, whether we are not to confine our believing regards to a dying Saviour, was matter of considerable doubt.—At first, I was inclined to acquiesce in the affirmative. After long consideration and many prayers, my faith fixed upon the whole of Christ’s mediatorial undertaking; which began in his spontaneous submission to the law; was carried on through all his meritorious life; and issued in his atoning death.—This is now the basis of my confidence, and the bulwark of my happiness. Hither I fly; here I rest; as the dove, after her wearisome and fruitless roving, returned to Noah, and rested in the ark.

* 1 Cor. ii.

† Acts iv. 12.

to embrace the doctrine of Christ's imputed righteousness.

This scheme first recommended itself to my affections; as making the most ample provision for the security and repose of a guilty conscience; which, when alarmed by the accusations of sin, is very apprehensive of its condition; and will not be comforted, till every scruple is satisfied, and all the obstructions to its peace are removed. Thus I reasoned with myself: "Though there is, undoubtedly, something to be said for the other side of the question, yet this is evidently the safest method. And, in an affair of infinite consequence, who would not prefer the safest expedient?—Should the righteousness of Jesus Christ be indispensably requisite, as a wedding-garment; what will they do, when the great immortal King appears, who have refused to accept it? Whereas, should it not prove so absolutely necessary, yet such a dependence can never obstruct our salvation. It can never be charged upon us as an article of contumacy or perverseness, that we thought too meanly of our own, too magnificently of our Lord's obedience. So that let the die turn either way, we are exposed to no hazard.—This scheme takes in all that the other systems comprehend, and abundantly more. In this I find no defect, no flaw, no shadow of insufficiency. It is somewhat like the perfect cube; which, wherever it may be thrown, or however it may fall, is sure to settle upon its base.—Supposing, therefore, the important beam should hang in equilibrio, with respect to argument; these circumstances, cast into the scale, may very justly be allowed to turn the balance."

Upon a more attentive examination of the subject, I perceived,—that this is the doctrine of our national church; is enforced by the attestation of our ablest divines; and has been, in all ages, the consolation of the most eminent saints:—that it is the genuine sense of scripture, and not some inferior or subordinate point, incidentally touched upon by the inspired writers, but the sum and substance of their heavenly message;*

* This doctrine runs through St. Paul's writings, like a golden warp. While privileges, blessings, and evangelical duties are like a

Christ's righteousness is the sum and substance of the scriptures.

that which constitutes the vitals of their system, and is the very soul of their religion. On which account the whole gospel is denominated from it, and styled "the ministration of righteousness."—I was farther convinced, that this way of salvation magnifies, beyond compare, the divine law; is no less honourable to all the divine attributes; and exhibits the ever-blessed Mediator in the most illustrious and the most delightful view;—All these considerations, under the influence of the eternal Spirit, have determined my judgment, and established my faith. So that I trust, neither the subtilties of wit, nor the sneers of ridicule, nor any other artifice, shall ever be able to separate me from the grace and righteousness which are in Jesus Christ.

Let me now, by way of conclusion, review that awful subject which introduced the letter. Let me suppose the Judge, who is at the door, actually come; the great and terrible day, which is hasting forward,* really commenced.—Hark the trumpet sounds the

woof (if I may allude to the ornaments of the sanctuary) of blue, of purple, of scarlet, and indeed of every pleasant colour. "The righteousness of God," Rom. i. 17.—"The righteousness from God," Phil. iii. 10.—"Righteousness by faith," Rom. iii. 22.—"Righteousness of faith," Rom. iv. 11.—"Righteousness without the law," Rom. iii. 21.—"Righteousness without works," Rom. iv. 6.—"Righteousness in the blood of Christ," Rom. v. 9.—"Righteousness by the obedience of Christ," Rom. v. 19.—"Righteousness not our own," Phil. iii. 9.—"Righteousness imputed by God," Rom. iv. 6, 10, 22.

* The sacred writers, I observe, often remind their readers of this grand event; often display this delightful dreadful scene. Their manner of speaking shews, that they themselves lived under the habitual and joyful expectation of it; as persons, who were "looking for, and hasting to, the coming of the day of God."—They represent it, not only as sure, but near; yea, very near, and upon the point to take place. "The Lord is at hand. The Judge is at the door. Yet a little while, and he that shall come, will come, and will not tarry." The last passage is the most spirited and emphatical of them all; but has lost much of its emphasis, by the English version. It is in the original *μικρον οσον οσον*. A beautiful pleonasm; by which the Septuagint, though too often inaccurate in translating the prophetic text, have very happily expressed Isaiah's *במעט רגע* which may I think, be rendered in our language, "yet a very, very little while." Heb. x. 37. Isa. xxvi. 20.

The only sure ground of confidence at the day of judgment.

universal summons. The living are struck with a death-like astonishment; the dead start from their silent abode.—See! the whole earth takes fire; the sun is turned into darkness; and the stars fall from their spheres. Behold! the Lord Jesus comes with myriads of his angels. The judgment is set, and the books are opened.

Observe those exemplary christians, whose sentiments I have been collecting. They renounce themselves, and rely on their glorious Surety. Methinks I hear them say, each as they quit their beds of dust: “I will go forth from the grave in thy strength, O blessed Jesus; and, at the decisive tribunal, will make mention of thy righteousness only.” At the same time, you will, Theron, or shall I, stand forth and declare, before the innumerable multitudes of anxious sinners and adoring seraphs, “Let those pusillanimous creatures fly for refuge to their Saviour’s righteousness. We will confide in works, in accomplishments of our own. We are the men, who have personally kept the divine law, and want no suppositious obedience from another. Let the eye that glances through immensity, and penetrates the recesses of the heart; let that holy and omniscient eye, examine our temper, and sift our conduct. We are bold to risk our souls, and all their immortal interest, on the issue of such a scrutiny.”

Perhaps, your mind is impressed with the solemn scene, and your thoughts recoil at such daring presumption. If so, it will be proper for me to withdraw, and leave you to your own meditations. At such moments to obtrude on your company, would render me the troublesome and officious, rather than

The respectful and affectionate,

ASPASIO.

LETTER VI.

THERON TO ASPASIO.

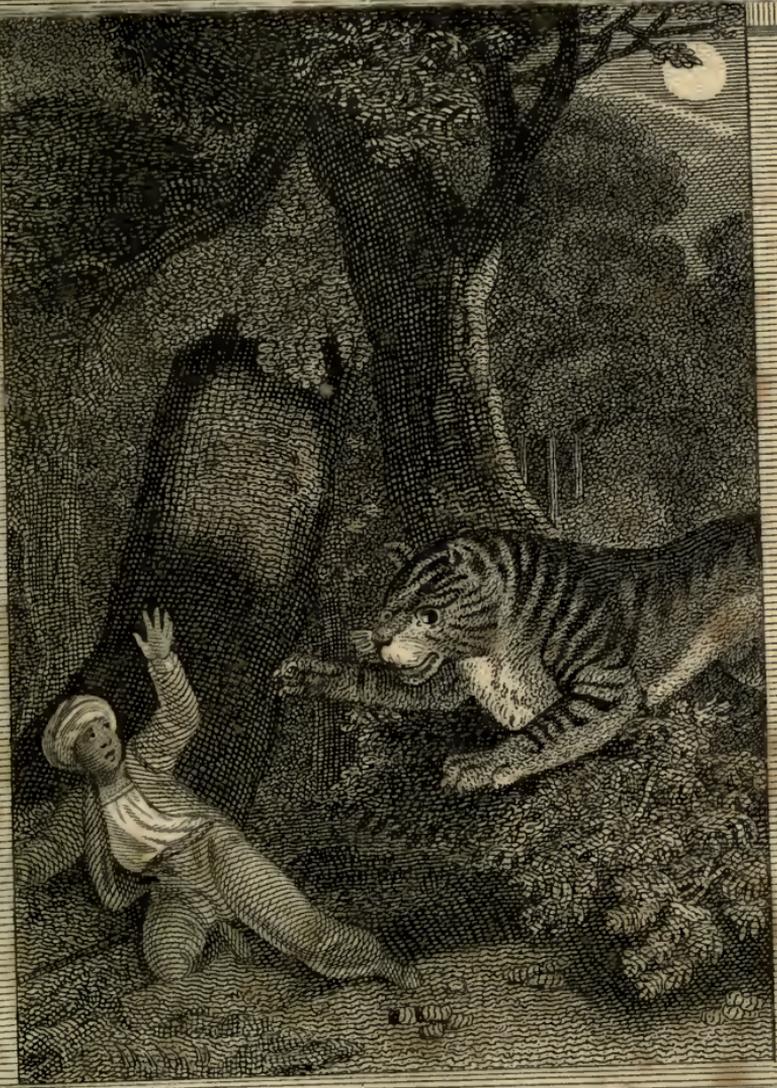
Dear Aspasio,

THE last evening was one of the finest I ever saw. According to custom, I made an excursion into the open fields; and wanted nothing to complete the satisfaction, but my friend's company.* I could not but observe, how much your improving conversation heightened the charms of nature. When religion applied philosophy, every thing was instructive, as well as pleasing.—Not a breeze swept over the plains, to clear the sky, and cool the air, but it tended also to disperse our doubts, and enliven our faith in the supreme all-sufficient Good.—Not a cloud tinged the firmament with radiant colours, or amused the sight with romantic shapes, but we beheld a picture of the present world, of its fading acquisitions and fantastic joys, in the mimic forms and the transitory scene. Even the weakest of the insect tribe, that skim the air in sportive silence, addressed us with the strongest incitements, and gave us the loudest calls, to be active in our day, and useful in our generation. They cried, at least when you lent them your tongue,

Such is vain life, an idle flight of days,
A still delusive round of sickly joys,
A scene of little cares, and trifling passions,
If not ennobled by the deeds of virtue.

How often, at the approach of sober eve, have we stole along the cloisters of a sequestered bower; attentive to the tale of some querulous current, that seemed to be struck with horror at the awful gloom; and complained with heavier murmur, as it passed under the blackening shades, and along the root ob-

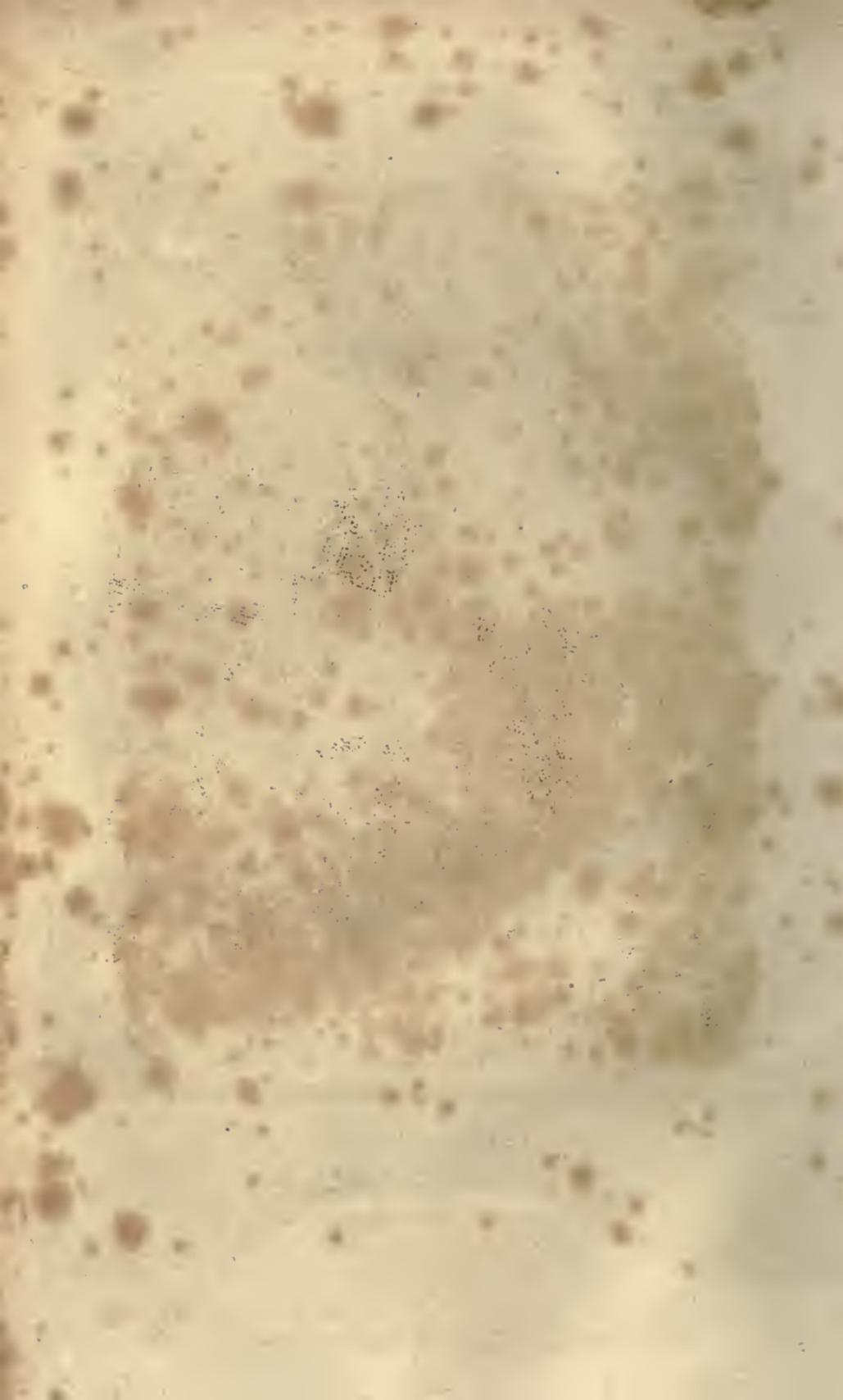
* Tu quod abes excepto, cætera lætu.



WATERBURY & ASPASTO.
Letter the Sixth.

W. N. Craig, Del.

Fulmer, Sculp.



of their past excursions.

structed channel!—Or else, far from the babbling brook, and softly treading the grassy path, we listened to the nightingale's song; while every gale held its breath, and all the leaves forbore their motion, that they might neither drown nor interrupt the melodious woe.—From both which pensive strains, you endeavoured to temper and chastise the exuberant gaiety of my spirits. You convinced me, that true joy is a serious thing;* is the child of sedate thought, not the spawn of intemperate mirth; nursed, not by the sallies of dissolute merriment, but by the exercise of serene contemplation.

Sometimes, at the gladsome return of morn, we have ascended an airy eminence; and hailed the new-born day; and followed, with our delighted eye, the mazes of some glittering stream.—Here rushing, with impetuous fury, from the mountain's side; foaming over the rifted rocks, and roaring down the craggy steep; impatient, as it were, to get free from such rugged paths, and mingle with the beauties of the lower vale.—There slackening its headlong career, and smoothing its eddies into an even flow. While, deep embosomed in the verdant mead, it glides through the cherished and smiling herbage. Sometimes lost amidst closing willows; sometimes emerging with fresh beauty from the leafy covert; always roving with an air of amorous complacency; as though it would caress the fringed banks, and flowery glebe.—Reminded, by this watery monitor, of that constancy and vigour, with which the affections should move towards the great centre of happiness, Christ Jesus;—of that determined ardour, with which we should break through the entanglements of temptation, and obstacles of the world, in order to reach our everlasting rest;—and of the mighty difference between the turbulent, the frothy, the precipitate gratifications of vice, and the calm, the substantial, the permanent delights of religion.

* Res severa est verum gaudium.

Or else, with eager view, we have surveyed the extensive prospect, and wandered over all the magnificence of things; an endless variety of graceful objects, and the delightful scenes; each soliciting our chief regard; every one worthy of our whole attention; all conspiring to touch the heart with a mingled transport of wonder, of gratitude, and of joy.—So that we have returned from our rural expedition, not as the spendthrift from the gaming-table, cursing his stars, and raving at his ill luck; gulled of his money, and the decided dupe of sharpers. Not as the libertine from the house of wantonness,* surfeited with rank debauch, dogged by shame, goaded by remorse, with a thousand recent poisons tingling in his veins. But we returned as ships of commerce from the golden continent, or the spicy islands, with new accessions of sublime improvement, and solid pleasure: with a deeper veneration for the almighty Creator; with a warmer sense of his unspeakable favours; and with a more inflamed desire, “to know him now by faith, and after this life to have the fruition of his glorious Godhead.”

Sometimes, with an agreeable relaxation, we have transferred our cares, from the welfare of the nation,

* Solomon, in order to deter unwary youth from those sinks of uncleanness, represents the harlot under the character of a pestilent hag, or baleful sorceress. “Her feet go down to death,” Prov. v. 5. “Her house is the high road to hell,” Prov. vii. 27; yea, “her guests are in the depths of hell,” Prov. ix. 18.—The second clause seems to be emphatical. The original expression is in the plural number כַּדָּר. I choose therefore to render it not simply the road, but more largely the high road; from which many other ways of guilt branch out, in which many other paths of ruin coincide. There Murder is often known to drench her dagger in blood; Robbery forms the rash resolve, which ends in the ignominious halter. There Intemperance daily brews the bowl, which enervates the constitution, and transforms the man into a beast. While Disease, pale cadaverous noisome disease, anticipates the putrefaction of the grave, and causes the wretched martyrs of vice to rot even above ground.—Well may every one, who loves life, and would fain see good days, cry out with a mixture of detestation and dread, “O my soul, come not thou into their horrid haunts!”

of their past excursions.

to the flourishing of the farm; and, instead of enacting regulations for the civil community, we have planned schemes for the cultivation of our ground, and the prosperity of our cattle.—Instead of attending the course of fleets, and the destination of armies, we have directed the plough, where to rend the grassy turf; or taught the honeysuckle to wind round the arbour, and the jessamine to climb upon the wall.—Instead of interposing our friendly offices, to reconcile contending kingdoms; we have formed a treaty of coalition, between the stranger cyon, and the adopting tree; and, by the remarkable melioration of the ensuing fruit, demonstrated (would contending empires regard the precedent) what advantages flow from pacific measures, and an amicable union.—Instead of unravelling the labyrinths of state, and tracing the finesses of foreign courts; we have made ourselves acquainted with the politics of nature, and observed, how wonderfully, how mysteriously, that great projectress acts.—In this place she rears a vast trunk, and unfolds a multiplicity of branches, from one small berry.—She qualifies, by her amazing operations, a few contemptible acorns, that were formerly carried in a child's lap, to bear the British thunder round the globe, and secure to our island the sovereignty of the ocean.—In another place, she produces, from a dry grain, “first the green blade; then the turgid ear; afterwards the full grown and ripened corn in the ear;”^{*} repaying, with exact punctuality, and with lavish usury, the husbandman's toil, and the husbandman's loan; causing, by a most surprising resurrection, the death of one seed, to be fruitful in the birth of hundreds.

But I forget your caution, Aspasio; forget how kindly you have checked me, when I have been haranguing upon, I know not what, powers and works of nature. Whereas it is God who “worketh hitherto;”[†] who to this day exerts, and to the end of time will

^{*} Mark iv. 28.

[†] John x. 17.

exert, that secret but unremitted energy, which is the life of this majestic system, and the cause of all its stupendous operations.—Let this shew you, how much I want my guide, my philosopher, and friend. Without his prompting aid, my genius is dull; my reflections are awkward; and my religious improvements jejune; somewhat like the bungling imitations of the tool, compared with the masterly effects of vegetation. However, I will proceed; yet not from any view of informing my Aspasio, but only to draw a bill upon his pen; and lay him under an obligation to enrich me with another letter, upon the grand and excellent subject of his last.

Art is dim-sighted in her plans, and defective even in her most elaborate essays. But Nature, or rather nature's sublime Author, is indeed a designer, and "a workman that need not be ashamed."* His eye strikes out ten thousand elegant models, and his touch executes all with inimitable perfection.—What an admirable specimen is here, of the divine skill, and of the divine goodness! This terraqueous globe is intended, not only for a place of habitation, but for a store-house of convenience. If we examine the several apartments of our great abode; if we take a general inventory of our common goods; we shall find the utmost reason to be charmed with the displays, both of nice economy, and of boundless profusion.

Observe the surface of this universal message. The ground, coarse as it may seem, and trodden by every foot, is nevertheless the laboratory, where the most exquisite operations are performed; the shop, if I may so speak, where the finest manufactures are wrought. Though a multitude of generations have always been accommodated, and though a multitude of nations are daily supplied by its liberalities, it still continues inexhausted; is a resource that never fails; a magazine never to be drained.

* 2 Tim. ii. 15.

The unevenness of the ground, far from being a blemish or a defect, heightens its beauty, and augments its usefulness.—Here it is scooped into deep and sheltered vales, almost constantly covered with a spontaneous growth of verdure; which, all tender and succulent, composes an easy couch, and yields the most agreeable fodder for the various tribes of cattle.—There it is extended into a wide, open, champaign country; which, annually replenished with the husbandman's seed, shoots into a copious harvest: a harvest, not only of that principal wheat, which is the staff of our life, and strengthens our heart; but of the "appointed barley,"* and various other sorts of grain, which yields an excellent food for our animals; and either enable them to dispatch our drudgery, or else fatten their flesh for our tables.

The furrows, obedient to the will of man, vary their produce.† They bring forth a crop of tall, flexible, slender plants:‡ whose thin filmy coat, dried, attenuated, and skilfully manufactured, transforms itself into some of the most necessary accommodations of life, and genteelest embellishments of society.—It is wove into ample volumes of cloth; which, fixed to the mast, gives wings to our ships, and wafts them to the extremities of the ocean. It is twisted into vast lengths of cordage; which add nerves to the cranes, and lend sinews to the pulley; or else, adhering to the anchor, they fasten the vessel even on the fluctuating element, and secure its station even amidst driving tempests.—It furnishes the duchess with her costly head dress, and delicately fine ruffles. No less strong than neat, it supplies the ploughman with his coarse frock, and the sailor with his clumsy trowsers. Its fibres, artfully ranged by the operations of

* Isa. xxviii. 25.

† One may venture to say of the earth, with regard to its vegetable operations,

Omnia transformat sese in miracula rerum.

‡ Flax and hemp.

the loom, cover our tables with a graceful elegance, and surround our bodies with a cherishing warmth. On this the painter spreads the colours, which enchant the eye; in this the merchant packs the wares, which enrich the world.

Yonder the hills, like a grand amphitheatre, arise. Amphitheatre! All the pompous works of Roman magnificence, are less than mole banks, are mere cockle shells, compared with those majestic elevations of the earth. Some clad with mantling vines; some crowned with towering cedars; some ragged with mishapen rocks, or yawning with subterraneous dens; whose rough and inaccessible crags, whose hideous and gloomy cavities, are not only a continual refuge for the wild goats; but have often proved an asylum to persecuted merit,* and a safeguard to the most valuable lives.

At a great distance, the mountains lift their frozen brows, and penetrate the clouds with their aspiring peaks. Their frozen brows arrest the roving, and condense the rarefied vapours.† Their caverned bowels collect the dripping treasures, and send them abroad in gradual communications, by trickling springs. While their steep sides precipitate the watery stores; rolling them on with such a forcible impulse,‡ that

* To David, from Saul's malice; to Elijah, from Jezebel's vengeance; to many of the primitive christians, from the rage of persecuting emperors. "They wandered in deserts and in mountains, in dens and caves of the earth." Heb. xi. 38.

† Therefore styled—*Nimbosa cacumina montes.* *Virg.*

‡ It is observed, that the largest rivers in the world, those which roll the heaviest burden of waters, and perform the most extensive circuit through the nations, generally take their rise from mountains. The Rhine, the Rhone, and the Po, all descend from the Alps. The Tygris derives its rapid flood from the everlasting snows and deep ridges of Niphates. And, to mention no more instances, the river Amazonas, which pours itself through a multitude of provinces, and waters near eighteen hundred leagues of land, has its urn in the caverns, and its impetus from the precipices, of that immense range of hills, the Andes.

If the reader is inclined to see the origin and formation of the rivers described, in all the sublimity of diction, and with all the

they never intermit their unwearied course, till they have swept through the most extensive climes, and regained their native seas.

The vineyard swells into a profusion of clusters, some tinged with the deepest purple, and delicately clouded with azure: some clad with a whitish transparent skin, which shews the tempting kernels, lodged in the luscious nectar.—The vine requires a strong reflection of the sun-beams, and a very large proportion of warmth. How commodiously do the hills and mountains minister to this purpose. May we not call those vast declivities, the garden-walls of nature? which, far more effectually than the most costly glasses, or most artful green-houses, concenter the solar heat, and complete the maturity of the grape: distending it with a liquor of the finest scent, the most agreeable relish, and the most exalted qualities; such as dissipate sadness, and inspire vivacity; such as make glad the heart of man, and most sweetly prompt, both his gratitude, and his duty, to the munificent Giver.—I grieve, and I blush for my fellow-creatures, that any should abuse this indulgence of heaven; that any should turn so valuable a gift of God into an instrument of sin; turn the most exhilarating of cordials into poison, madness, and death.

The kitchen-garden presents us with a new train of benefits: In its blooming ornaments, what unaffected beauty! in its culinary productions, what diversified riches! It ripens a multitude of nutrimental esculents, and almost an equal abundance of medicinal herbs; distributing refreshments to the healthy, and administering remedies to the sick.—The orchard, all fair and ruddy, and bowing down beneath its own delicious burden, gives us a fresh demonstration of our Creator's

graces of poetry, he may find this entertainment in Mr. Thomson's Autumn, line 781, last edit.

Amazing scene! behold, the glooms disclose.

I see the rivers in their infant beds!

Deep, deep I hear them, lab'ring to get free! &c.

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kindness; regales us, first, with all the delicacies of summer fruits; next, with the more lasting succession of autumnal dainties.

What is nature, but a series of wonders, and a fund of delights? That such a variety of fruits, so beautifully coloured, so elegantly shaped, and so charmingly flavoured, should arise from the earth? than which nothing is more insipid, sordid, and despicable.—I am struck with pleasing astonishment at the cause of these fine effects; and no less surprised at the manner of bringing them into existence. I take a walk in my garden, or a turn through my orchard, in the month of December. There stands several logs of wood, fastened to the ground. They are erect indeed, and shapely, but without either sense or motion. No human hand will touch them, no human aid will succour them; yet in a little time, they are beautified with blossoms, they are covered with leaves, and at last are loaded with mellow treasures; with the downy peach and the polished plum; with the musky apricot and juicy pear; with the cherry, and its coral pendants, glowing through lattices of green,

—————and dark,
Beneath her ample leaf, the luscious fig.

I have wondered at the structure of my watch; wondered more at the description of the silk mills; most of all, at the account of those prodigious engines invented by Archimedes. But what are all the inventions of all the geometricians and mechanics in the world, compared with those inconceivably rich automata of nature!* These self-operating machines dis-

* Automata, or self-operating machines: not meant to set aside the superintendency of Providence, but only to exclude the co-operation of man.

The word *αυτοματα* is used by our Master; is a very fine and most expressive word; for which reason, I have endeavoured to give it a kind of English naturalization. It signifies, says a Greek scholiast, *τας μηχανας, αι κατ' αυτας ενεργουσαι*. See Mark iv. 28.—It is an explanation and an abridgment of that remarkable phrase, which occurs in the Mosaic history of the creation, *אשר ברא אלהים לעשות* Gen. ii. 3.

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patch their business, with a punctuality that never mistakes, with a dexterity that cannot be equalled. In spring, they clothe themselves with such unstudied but exquisite finery, as far exceeds the embroidery of the needle, or the labours of the loom. In autumn, they present us with such a collation of sweetmeats, and such blandishments of taste, as surpass all that the most critical luxury could prepare, or the most lavish fancy imagine.—So that those coarse and senseless logs first decorate the divine creation, then perform the honours of the table.

If, amidst these ordinary productions of the earth, God appears so “great in counsel, and mighty in works;”* what may we expect to see in the palaces of heaven; in the hierarchies of angels; and in the wonderful Redeemer, who is beyond all other objects, beyond all other manifestations, the wisdom “of God, and the power of God!”†

The forest rears myriads of massy bodies, which, though neither gay with blossoms, nor rich with fruit, supply us with timber of various kinds, and every desirable quality.‡ But who shall cultivate such huge trees, diffused over so vast a space? The toil were endless. See therefore the all-wise and ever-gracious ordination of Providence.‡ They are so constituted, that they have no need of the spade and

“Which God created and made,” appears tautological, and is by no means an exact translation. It should rather be interpreted, “which God created in order to make:” to make, by these prolific instruments and reproducing principles, a continual succession of animals, vegetables, and creatures.

* Jer xxxii. 19.

† 1 Cor. i. 24.

‡ Tully has given us an abridgment of all the preceding particulars: which, I think, is one of the finest landscapes in miniature, that the descriptive pen ever drew.—“Terra universa cernatur, vestita floribus, herbis, arboribus, frugibus; quorum omnium incredibilis multitudo insatiabili varietate distinguitur. Adde huc fontium gelidas perennitates liquores perlucidos omnium, riparum vestitus viridissimos speluncarum concavas altitudines, saxorum asperitates, impendentium montium altitudines, immensitatesque camporum. De Nat. Deor. lib. II.

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the pruning-knife. Nay, the little cares of man would diminish, rather than augment their dignity and their usefulness. The more they are neglected, the better they thrive; the more wildly grand and magnificent they grow.

When felled by the axe, they are sawed into beams, and sustain the roofs of our houses: they are fashioned into carriages, and serve for the conveyance of the heaviest loads.—Their substance so pliant, that they yield to the chisel of the turner, and are smoothed by the plane of the joiner; are wrought into the nicest diminutions of shape, and compose some of the finest branches of household furniture.—Their texture so solid, that they form the most important parts of those mighty engines; which, adapting themselves to the play of mechanic powers, dispatch more work in a single hour, than could otherwise be accomplished in many days. At the same time, their pressure is so light, that they float upon the waters; and glide along the surface, almost with as much agility, as the finny fry glance through the deep.—Thus, while they impart magnificence to architecture, and bestow numberless conveniences on the family; they constitute the very basis of navigation, and give expedition, give being to commerce.

Amidst the inaccessible depths of the forest, an habitation is assigned for those ravenous beasts, whose appearance would be frightful, and their neighbourhood dangerous to mankind. Here the sternly majestic lion rouses himself from his den; stalks through the midnight shades; and awes the savage herds with his roar. Here the fiery tiger springs upon his prey, and the gloomy bear trains up her whelps. Here the swift leopard ranges, and the grim wolf prowls, and both in quest of murder and blood.—Were these horrid animals to dwell in our fields, what havock would they make! what consternation would they spread! But they voluntarily bury themselves in the deepest recesses of the desert; while the ox, the horse, and

the serviceable quadrupeds, live under our inspection, and keep within our call; profiting us as much by their presence, as the others oblige us by their absence.

If, at any time, those shaggy monsters make an excursion into the habitable world, it is when man retires to his chamber, and sleeps in security. The sun, which invites other creatures abroad, gives them the signal to retreat. "The sun riseth, and they get them away, and lay them down in their dens."* Strange! that the orient light, which is so pleasing to us, should strike such terror on them! should, more effectually than a legion of guards, put them all to flight, and clear the country of those formidable enemies.

If we turn our thoughts to the atmosphere, we find a most curious and exquisite appearance of air: which, because no object of our sight, is seldom observed, and little regarded; yet is a source of innumerable advantages. And all these advantages (which is almost incredible) are fetched from the very jaws of ruin. My meaning may be obscure, therefore I explain myself.

We live plunged, if I may so speak, in an ocean of air. Whose pressure, upon a person of moderate size, is equal to the weight of twenty thousand pounds. Tremendous consideration! Should the ceiling of a room, or the roof of a house, fall upon us with half that force, what destructive effects must ensue! Such a force would infallibly drive the breath from our lungs, or break every bone in our bodies. Yet so admirably has the divine wisdom contrived this aerial fluid, and so nicely counterpoised its dreadful power, that we receive not the slightest hurt; we suffer no manner of inconvenience; we even enjoy the load. Instead of being as a mountain on our loins, it is like wings to our feet, or like sinews to our limbs. Is not this common ordination of Pro-

* Psa. civ. 22.

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vidence, thus considered, somewhat like the miracle of the burning bush; whose tender and combustible substance, though in the midst of flames, was neither consumed nor injured?* Is it not almost as marvelous, as the prodigy of the three Hebrew youths, who walked in the fiery furnace, without having a hair of their head singed, or so much as the smell of fire passing on their garments?†—Surely we have reason to say unto God, “O how terrible,” yet how beneficent, “art thou in thy works!”

The air, though too weak to support our flight, is a thoroughfare for innumerable wings. Here the whole commonwealth of birds take up their abode. Here they lodge and expatiate, beyond the reach of their adversaries. Were they to run upon the earth, they would be exposed to ten thousand dangers, without proper strength to resist them, or sufficient speed to escape them. Whereas, by mounting the skies, and “lifting themselves up on high, they are secure from peril, they scorn the horse and his rider.”‡—Some of them perching upon the boughs, others soaring amidst the firmament, entertain us with their notes; which are musical and agreeable, when heard at this convenient distance; but would be noisy and importunate, if brought nearer to our ears.—Here many of those feathered families reside, which yield us a delicious treat; yet give us no trouble, put us to no expence, and, till the moment we want them, are wholly out of our way.

The air, commissioned by its all-bountiful Author, charges itself with the administration of several offices, which are perfectly obliging, and no less serviceable to mankind.—Co-operating with our lungs, it ventilates the blood, and refines our fluids. It qualifies and attempers the vital warmth, promotes and exalts the animal secretions. Many days we might live, or even whole months, without the light of the sun or the glimmering of a star. Whereas, if we are deprived,

* Exod. iii. 2.

† Dan. iii. 27.

‡ Job xxxix. 19.

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only for a few minutes, of the aerial support, we sicken, we faint, we die. The same universal nurse has a considerable share in cherishing the several tribes of plants. It helps to transfuse vegetable vigour into the trunk of the oak; and a blooming gaiety into the spread of the rose.

The air undertakes to convey to our nostrils the extremely subtile effluvia, which transpire from odoriferous bodies. Those detached particles are so imperceptibly small, that they would elude the most careful hand, or escape the nicest eye. But this trusty depository receives and escorts the invisible vagrants, without losing so much as a single atom: entertaining us by this means, with the delightful sensations, which arise from the fragrance of flowers; and admonishing us, by the transmission of offensive smells, to withdraw from an unwholesome situation, or beware of any pernicious food.

The air, by its undulating motion, conducts to our ear all the diversities of sound; and thereby discharges the duty of a most seasonable and faithful monitor. As I walk across the streets of London, with my eye engaged on other objects, a dray, perhaps, with all its load, is driving down directly upon me. Or, as I ride along the road, musing and unapprehensive, a chariot and six is whirling on, with a rapid career, at the heels of my horse. The air, like a vigilant friend, in pain for my welfare, immediately takes the alarm; and, while the danger is at a considerable distance, dispatches a courier to advertise me of the approaching mischief. It even thunders in my ear; and with a clamorous but kind importunity, urges me to be upon my guard, and provide for my safety.

The air wafts to our sense all the modulations of music, and the more agreeable entertainments of refined conversation. When Myrtilla strikes the silver strings, and teaches the willing harpsichord to warble with her Creator's praise; when her sacred sonata warms the heart with devotion, and wings our desires to heaven.—When Cleora tunes her song, or the

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nightingale imitates her enchanting voice: when she heightens every melodious note, with her adored Redeemer's name; and so smoothes her charming tones, so breathes her rapturous soul, "that God's own ear listens delighted."—When Wisdom takes its seat on Mitio's tongue; and flows, in perspicuous periods, and instructive truths, amidst the chosen circle of his acquaintance.—When Benevolence, associated with Persuasion, dwell on Nicander's lips, and plead the cause of injured innocence, or oppressed virtue.—When Goodness, leagued with Happiness, accompany Eusebius into the pulpit; and reclaim the libertine from the slavery of his vices; disengage the infidel from the fascination of his prejudices; and so affectionately, so pathetically invite the whole audience, to partake the unequalled joys of pure religion!—In all these cases, the air distributes every musical variation with the utmost exactness; and delivers the speaker's message, with the most punctual fidelity. Whereas, without this internuncio, all would be sullen and unmeaning silence. We should lose both the pleasure and the profit; neither be charmed with the harmonious, nor improved by the articulate accents.

The breezes of the air, when vague and unconfined, are so very gentle, that they sport with the most inoffensive wantonness amidst Ophelia's locks, and scarce disadjust a single curl. But, when collected and applied by the contrivance of man, they act with such prodigious force, as is sufficient to whirl round the hugest wheels, though clogged with the most encumbering loads. They make the ponderous millstones move as swiftly, as the dancer's heel; and the massy beams play as nimbly, as the musician's finger.

If we climb, in speculation, the higher regions, we find an endless succession of clouds, fed by evaporations from the ocean. The clouds are themselves a kind of ocean, suspended in the air with amazing skill. They travel in detached parties, and in the quality of itinerant cisterns, round all the terrestrial

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globe. They fructify, by proper communications of moisture, the spacious pastures of the wealthy; and gladden, with no less liberal showers, the cottager's little spot. Nay, so condescending is the benignity of their great proprietor, that they "satisfy the desolate and waste ground; and cause, even in the most uncultivated wilds, the bud of the tender herb to spring forth:"* that the natives of the lonely desert, those savage herds which know no master's stall, may nevertheless experience the care, and rejoice in the bounty, of an all-supporting Parent.

How wonderful! that the water, which is much denser and far heavier than the air, should rise into it; make its way through it; and take a station in the very uppermost regions of it! This, one would imagine, were almost as impossible, as for the rivers to run back to their source. Yet Providence has contrived a way to render it not only practicable, but matter of continual occurrence.

How wonderful, that pendent lakes should be diffused, or fluid mountains heaped over our heads; and both sustained in the thinnest parts of the atmosphere! We little think of that surprising expedient, which, without conduits of stone, or vessels of brass, keeps such loads of water in a buoyant state. Job and Elihu considered this, and were struck with holy admiration. Dost thou know the balancings of the clouds? how such ponderous bodies are made to hang with an even poise, and hover like the lightest down? "These are the wondrous works of him, who is perfect in knowledge."† He bindeth up the "waters in his clouds: and the cloud," though nothing is more loose and fluid, becomes, by his almighty order, strong and tenacious as casks of iron; it "is not rent"‡ under all the weight.

When the sluices are opened, and the waters descend, we might reasonably suspect, that they should burst forth in cataracts, or pour out themselves in

* Job xxxviii. 27.

† Job xxxvii. 16.

‡ Job xxvi. 8.

torrents. Whereas, instead of such a disorderly and precipitate effusion, which would be infinitely pernicious, they coalesce into globules, and are dispensed in gentle showers. They are often attenuated into the smallness of a hair:* they spread themselves, as if they were strained through the orifices of the finest watering-pot; and form “those small drops of rain, which the clouds distil upon man abundantly.”† Thus, instead of drowning the earth, and sweeping away its fruits, they cherish universal nature; and, in conformity to the practice of their great Master, distribute their humid stores to men, to animals, and vegetables, “as they are able to bear them.”‡

Besides the reservoirs of water, here are cantoned various parties of winds, mild or fierce, gentle or boisterous; furnished with breezy wings, to fan the glowing firmament, and diffuse refreshment on a fainting world; or else fitted to act as an universal besom, and by sweeping the chambers of the atmosphere, to preserve the fine aerial fluid free from feculences. Without this wholesome agency of the winds, the air would stagnate, become putrid; and surround us, in the literal sense of the words, “with darkness that might be felt.”§ London, Paris, and all the great cities of the world, instead of being the seats of elegance, would degenerate into sinks of corruption.

At sea, the winds swell the mariner’s sails, and speed his course along the watery way; speed it far more effectually than a thousand rowers, bending to their strokes, and tugging at the oar.—By land, they perform the office of an immense seedsman, and scatter abroad the reproductive principles of a multitude of plants; which, though the staff of life to many animals, are too small for the management, or too mean for the attention, of man.—“He bringeth the winds out of

* The Hebrew words, which convey the idea of gentle rain, signify a portion of water, made small as a hair, or divided into millions of parts, וְנִרְבֵּיטֵי בְשָׁעִירִם Deut. xxxii. 2.

† Job xxxvi. 28.

‡ Mark iv. 33.

§ Exod. x. 21.

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his treasures,"* is a very just observation, whether it relates to God's absolute and uncontrollable dominion over this most potent meteor, or to its welcome and salutary influence† on all the face of nature.

Here are lightnings stationed. Though dormant at present, they are in act to spring, and launch the livid flame; whenever their piercing flash is necessary to destroy the sulphurous vapours; or dislodge any other noxious matter, which might be prejudicial to the delicate temperature of the ether, and obscure its more than crystalline transparency.

Above all is situate a radiant and majestic orb, which enlightens the tracts, cheers the inhabitants, and colours all the productions of this habitable globe. While the air, by a singular address in managing the rays, amplifies their usefulness; its reflecting power‡ augments that heat, which is the life of nature; its refracting power prolongs that splendour, which is the beauty of the creation.—These emanations of light, though formed of inactive matter, yet (astonishing apparatus of Almighty wisdom!) are refined almost to the subtilty of spirit, and are scarce inferioreven to thought

* Psa. cxxxv. 7.

† Quam salutaes autem dedit, quam tempestivos non mode hominum sed etiam pecudum generi, iis denique omnibus quæ oriuntur a terra, ventos? quorum flatu nimii temperantur calores, ab iisdem etiam maritimi cursus celeres et certi diriguntur.—De Nat. Deor. lib. II.

‡ The air is a curious cover, which, without oppressing the inhabitants of the earth with any perceivable weight, confines, reflects, and thereby increases the vivifying heat of the sun. The air increases this kindly heat, much in the same manner as our garments by day, or bed-clothes by night, give additional warmth to our bodies.—Whereas, when the aerial vestment grows thin, or, to speak more philosophically, when the air becomes less in quantity, and more attenuated in quality, the solar warmth is very sensibly diminished. Travellers on the lofty mountains of America sometimes experience, to their terrible cost, the truth of this observation. Though the clime, at the foot of those prodigious hills, is even hot and sultry; yet, on their summits, the cold rages with such excessive severity, that it is no unusual calamity, for the horse and his rider to be frozen to death.—We have, therefore, great reason to bless the supreme Disposer of things, for placing us in the commodious concavity or rather under the cherishing wings of an atmosphere.

A cursory view of

in speed. By which means, they spread themselves, with a kind of instantaneous swiftness, through the circumference of the whole hemisphere; and though they fill wherever they pervade, yet they straiten no place, embarrass no one, encumber nothing.

These give the diamond its brilliancy, and the velvet its gloss: to these the cheerful eye is obliged for its lively sparkle, and the modest cheek for its rosy blush. These, attending the judicious touches of the pencil, bid the drapery flow, and the embodied figure arise; bid the countenance wear the calm serenity of thought, or be agitated with the wild transports of passion.—Without this circumstance of colour, we should want all the entertainments of vision, and be at a loss to distinguish one thing from another. We should hesitate to pronounce, and must take a little journey to determine, whether yonder inclosure contains a piece of pasturage, or a plot of arable land. We should question, and could not very expeditiously resolve, whether the next person we meet, be a soldier in his regimentals, or a swain in his holiday suit? a bride in her ornaments, or a widow in her weeds? But colour, like a particular livery, characterizes the class, to which every individual belongs. It is the label, which indicates, upon the first inspection, its respective quality. It is the ticket, which guides our choice, and directs our hand.*

* This, I believe, suggests the true sense of those noble metaphors, used by the divine speaker. “It is turned as clay to the seal, and they stand as a garment:” if the earth, and all its productions, receive from the rising sun, both colour and beauty. Just as the soft clay, and melting wax, receive an elegant impression from the seal.—They (the morning and the day spring, mentioned in a preceding verse) “stand as a garment;” they act the part of a magnificent and universal clothing; give all visible objects, their comely aspect, and graceful distinctions. Job xxxvii. 14.

What bold and fine images are here!—The sea had been described as an infant, changeable, froward, and impetuous, with thick darkness for its swaddling band. The light is represented as an hand-maid, attending to dress the creation; and executing the Creator's orders, with a punctuality that never fails, with a speed that cannot be equalled.

We have cursorily surveyed the upper rooms of our great habitation, and taken a turn along the ground floor; if we descend into the subterraneous lodgments, the cellars of the stately structure, we shall there also find the most exquisite contrivance acting in concert with the most profuse goodness.—Here are various minerals, of sovereign efficacy in medicine; which rectify the vitiated blood, and quicken the languid spirits; which often rekindle the fading bloom in the virgin's complexion, and reinvigorate the enfeebled arm of manhood.—Here are beds fraught with metals of the richest value. From hence come the golden treasures, from hence the silver stores, which are the very life of traffic; and circulate through the body politic, as the vital fluid through the animal frame; which, in the refining hand of charity, are feet to the lame, and eyes to the blind, and make the widow's heart sing for joy.—Here are mines, which yield a metal of meaner aspect, but of a firmer cohesion, and of superior usefulness: a metal, that constitutes almost all the implements with which Art executes her various designs. Without the assistance of iron, trade would be reduced to the lowest ebb; commerce would feel her wings clipped; and every species of mechanic skill, either utterly fail, or be miserably baffled. Without the assistance of iron, it would be almost impossible to rear the steady mast, to display the daring canvass, or drop the faithful anchor. Destitute of this ever-needful commodity, we should have no plough to furrow the soil, no shuttle to traverse the loom, scarce any ornament for polite, or any utensil for ordinary life.

Here is an inexhausted fund of combustible materials,* which supply the whole nation with fuel.

* As for the earth, says Job, out of it cometh bread: corn, vegetables, and whatever is good for food, spring from its surface. While under it is turned up as it were fire: its lower parts תחתיה its deeper strata, yield combustible materials; which are easily enkindled into fire, and administer the most substantial fuel for the flame. Job xxviii. 4.

These present their ministrations in the kitchen; and yielding themselves as aliment to the flame, render our food both palatable and healthy. These offer their service at the forge; and, with their piercing heat, mollify the most stubborn bars, till they become pliant to the stroke of the hammer.—The coals pour themselves likewise into the glass-houses. They rage, amidst those astonishing furnaces, with irresistible but useful fierceness. They liquefy even the obdurate flint, and make the most rigid substances far more ductile than the softest clay, or the melting wax; make them obsequious, not only to the lightest touch, but to the impressions of our very breath.

By this means we are furnished, and from the coarsest ingredients, with the most curious, beautiful, and serviceable manufacture in the world: a manufacture, which transmits the light and warmth of the sun into our houses, yet excludes the annoyance of the rains, and violence of the winds. Which gives new eyes to decrepit age, and vastly more enlarged views to philosophy and science; which leads up the astronomer's discernment, even to the satellites of Saturn; and carries down the naturalist's observation, as far as the animalcule race; bringing near what is immensely remote, and making visible what, to our unassisted sight, would be absolutely imperceptible.

We have also, when the sun withdraws his shining, an expedient to supply his place. We can create an artificial day in our rooms, and prolong our studies, or pursue our business, under its cheering influence. With beaming tapers and ruddy fires, we chase the darkness, and mitigate the cold;* we cherish conver-

* I can hardly forbear transcribing the grateful and pious remark, which Socrates makes on this occasion. Demonstrating, from the advantageous and benign constitution of things, God's indulgent care for mankind, he asks, Το δε και Το τυρ πορισαι ημεν, επικυρον μεν ψυχης, επικυρον δε σχολης, συνερπον δε προς πασαν τεχνην, και παντα οσα ωφελειας ενεκα ανθρωποι κατασκευαζονται Ως γαρ συνελοσι ειπειν, εδεν αξιολογον ανευ πυρος ανθρωποι των προς βιον χρησιμων κατασκευαζονται. To which his

the perfections of Nature.

sation, and cultivate the social spirit. We render those very intervals of time, some of the most delightful portions of our life, which otherwise would be a joyless and unimproving void.

The obscure caverns are the birth-place of the most sparkling gems; which, when nicely polished, and prodigal of their lustre, stand candidates for a place in the royal crown, or a seat on the virtuous fair one's breast: and, I will not with our men of gallantry say, emulate the living brilliancy of her eyes; but serve as a foil, to set off the loveliness and excellency of her accomplished mind, and amiable conversation; whose price, according to the unerring estimate of inspiration, is superior to sapphires, "is far above rubies."*

Here are quarries, stocked with stones, inferior in beauty to the jeweller's ware, but much more eminently beneficial: which, when properly ranged, and cemented with a tenacious mortar, form the convenient abodes of peace, and build the strongest fortifications of war; defending us from the inclemencies of the weather, and the more formidable assaults of our enemies. These constitute the arches of the bridge, which convey the traveller, with perfect security, over the deep and rapid stream. These

pupil very intelligently replies, *ὑπερβαλλει και τεισο φιλανθρωπια.*¹ Vide Socrat. Mem. lib. IV. A work which may be ranked among the finest remains of antiquity. Equal, 'tis acknowledged, to any of the ancient compositions, in purity of style, and dignity of sentiment. Superior, I think, to them all, for the artful, delicate, and happy manner of conveying instruction.

I wish the author of the preceding dialogues had been better acquainted with the Socratic method; and I could wish, that young students of the ministry would adopt the skill of this heathen philosopher. Perhaps, no qualification of human growth, would more effectually contribute to render them, what St. Paul styles *διδακτικους.*—It seems to be the most insinuating and succesful way both to convince and instruct. Nay, it convinces the opponent out of his own mouth, and makes the pupil instruct himself. It is what the Teacher sent from God practised, in those incomparable sketches of obliging and masterly addresses, the parable of the two debtors, and of the good Samaritan.¹ Luke vii. 41. Luke x. 30.

* Prov. xxxi. 10.

strengthen the arms, the stupendous arms, of the mole; which stretch themselves far into the ocean, break the impetuosity of the surge, and screen the bark from tempestuous seas.—These stony treasures are comparatively soft, while they continue in the bowels of the earth; but acquire an increasing hardness, when exposed to the open air. Was this remarkable peculiarity reversed, what difficulties would attend the labours of the mason! His materials could not be extracted from their bed, or fashioned for his purpose, without infinite toil. Were his work completed, it could not long withstand the fury of the elements; but insensibly mouldering, or incessantly decaying, would elude the expectations of the owner; perhaps, might prove an immature grave, instead of a durable dwelling.

Here are various assortments or vast layers of clay; which, however contemptible in its appearance, is abundantly more advantageous than the rocks of diamond, or the veins of gold. This is moulded, with great expedition and ease, into vessels of any shape, and of almost every size. Some so delicately fine, that they compose the most elegant and ornamental furniture, for the tea-table of a princess. Others so remarkably cheap, that they are ranged on the shelves, and minister at the meals, of the poorest peasant. All so perfectly neat, that no liquid takes the least taint, nor the nicest palate any disgust, from their cleanly services.

A multiplicity of other valuable stores, are locked up, by Providence, in those ample vaults. The key of all is committed to the management of industry; with free permission to produce each particular species, as necessity shall demand, or prudence direct.

Which shall we most admire, the bountiful heart, the liberal hand, or the all-discerning eye of our great Creator? How observable and admirable is his precaution, in removing these useful but cumbrous wares, from the superficies; and stowing them, in proper repositories, beneath the ground!—Were they

scattered over the surface of the soil, the earth would be embarrassed with the enormous load. Our roads would be blocked up, and scarce any portion left free for the operations of husbandry.—Were they buried extremely deep, or sunk to the centre of the globe, it would cost us immense pains to procure them; or rather, they would be quite inaccessible.—Were they uniformly spread into a pavement for nature; the trees could not strike their roots, nor the herbs shoot their blades, but universal sterility must ensue.—Whereas, by their present disposition, they furnish us with a magazine of metallic, without causing any diminution of our vegetable, treasures. Fossils of every splendid and serviceable kind enrich the bowels, while bloom and verdure embellish the face of the earth.

So judicious is the arrangement of this grand edifice! so beneficent the destination of its whole furniture!* in which, all is regulated with consummate skill, and touched into the highest perfection. All most exactly adapted to the various intentions of Providence, and the manifold exigencies of mankind; to supply every want we can feel; and gratify every wish we can form.

Insomuch that the whole system affords a favourite and exalted topic of praise, even to those distinguished beings, who stand on the sea of glass, “and have the harps of God in their hands.” They lift their voice and sing, “Great and marvellous are thy works, O Lord God Almighty!”†—And is there not reason, my Aspasio would say, infinite reason, for us to join this trium-

* No notice is taken of the ocean, in this little rent-roll of nature's wealth; because a distinct sketch is given of that grand receptacle and its principal services, in Letter IX.

† Rev. xv. 3. “Great and marvellous are thy works, O Lord God Almighty! just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints!” The first part seems to mean, what the inspired writer calls, “the song of Moses.” The second contains what he styles, “the song of the Lamb.” The first, I should imagine, relates to the stupendous works of creation. The second alludes to the far more wonderful scheme of redemption. The former, describing the system of nature, is recorded by Moses; the latter, comprehending the salvation of the saints, is accomplished by Christ.

A cursory view of the perfections of Nature.

phant choir; and add gratitude to our wonder, love to our hallelujahs? Since all these things are to us, not merely objects of contemplation, but sources of accommodation; not only a majestic spectacle, bright with the display of our Creator's wisdom, but an inestimable gift, rich with the emanations of his goodness. The earth hath he set before the inhabitants of glory, but "the earth hath he given to the children of men."*—Having given us ourselves; given us a world; has he not a right, a most unquestionable and unrivalled right, to make that tender demand, "My son, give me thy heart?"†

Shall I add another passage, which, viewed with any but the last paragraph, will be like the head of gold, eminent and conspicuous on feet of iron and clay? It is taken from the finest philosophical oration that ever was made. I never read it, but with a glow of delight, and with impressions of awe. It is, in short, inimitably spirited and sublime.—You think, perhaps, I act an impolitic part, in being so lavish of my praise, and that the quotation must suffer, by such an aggrandizing introduction. But I am under no apprehensions of this kind. Forbear to be delighted, if you can; cease to admire, if you can; when you hear omniscience itself declaring, that, on the sight of this universal fabric, emerging out of nothing, "The morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy."‡—The system was so graceful, so magnificent, and in all other respects so exquisitely finished, that the most exalted intelligences were charmed, were transported. They know not how to express themselves on the great occasion, but in shouts of exultation, and songs of praise. Is it possible for imagination to conceive an encomium so just, so high, so beautifully noble?—I am sure, after so much delicacy, and majesty of sentiment, any thing of mine must be intolerably flat; unless you will except this one profession, that I am, with the most cordial sincerity,

My dear Aspasio, inviolably yours,

THERON.

* Psa. cxv. 16.

† Prov. xxiii. 16.

‡ Job. xxxviii. 7.

The wisdom of making philosophy a handmaid to religion.

LETTER VII.

ASPASIO TO THERON.

Dear Theron,

IF you write with such a view, and from such a motive, as are mentioned in your last, expect no more free-will offerings from my pen. In this one instance, I shall think it my duty to be covetous. I shall act the miser out of principle, and hardly persuade myself to part with a single line, till it is become an undeniable debt. I must turn your own artifice on yourself; and lay you under a necessity of obliging, entertaining, and edifying me by your correspondence.

For give me leave to assure you, that I am always delighted, and always improved, by your epistles. They shew me a multitude of beauties in the creation, which I should not otherwise have discerned. They point out the infinite power, the unsearchable wisdom, and the charmingly rich goodness of the glorious Maker. Such a philosophy turns all nature into a school of instruction, and is an excellent handmaid to true religion. It makes every object a step, better than a golden step, to raise both our knowledge and our affections to the adorable and immortal Cause of all.

While I am roving heedlessly along, your remarks often interpose, like some intelligent faithful monitor, who claps his hand upon my breast, and says, "Stand still, and consider the wondrous works of God."*—Willingly I obey the admonition: the christian may, with peculiar complacency, consider this grand magazine of wonders; this copious storehouse of blessings: and, conscious of an interest in Jesus, has a

* Job xxxvii. 14.

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right to call all "his own."* He may look round upon present things; look forward into future things; and, trusting in his Saviour's merits, may confidently say, "Not one only, but both these worlds are mine. By virtue of my Redeemer's righteousness, I possess the necessary accommodations of this life; and, on the same unshaken footing, I stand entitled to the inconceivable felicity of a better."

Surely then it will be as pleasing an employ, and as important a search, to examine the validity of our title to future things, as to estimate the value of our present possessions. You have executed the one, let me attempt the other.—You have surveyed material nature. It appears to be a fair and stately mansion; void of all defect; and for the purposes which it is intended to answer, completely finished. Is not our Saviour's obedience, the provision made for indigent and guilty souls, equally rich and equally perfect!—Since this is everlasting and immutable; since the other is transient and perishable; doubtless we may argue with the judicious apostle: "If that which is to be done away, which will soon be consigned over to dissolution, is glorious; much more that which remaineth, whose blessed effects continue to eternal ages, "is glorious."†

We are every one "as an unclean thing."‡ Our very nature is contaminated. Even sanctification, though it destroys the reigning, does not wholly supersede the polluting power of iniquity. So that whatever graces we exercise, whatever duties we perform, (like the rays of light transmitted through coloured glass, or like generous wine streaming from a defiled cask,) they receive some improper tinge, or contract some debasing taint. But Christ was entirely free from this innate contagion. He had no erroneous apprehensions in his mind, no corrupt bias upon his will, nor any irregular concupiscence in his affections.

Being thus perfectly undefiled, "he did no sin;

* 1 Cor. iii. 21.

† 2 Cor. iii. 11.

‡ Isa. lxiv. 6.

neither was guile found in his mouth."* All his thoughts were innocent, all his words were irreproachable, and every action blameless. The most accomplished among the children of men, when surprised in some unguarded moment, or assaulted on some weak side, have been betrayed into error, or hurried into sin. Even Moses spake unadvisedly with his lips; and Aaron, the saint of the Lord, warped to idolatrous practices. They were like some stagnating lake; in which, the dregs being subsided, the waters appear clean; but when stirred by temptation, or agitated by affliction, the sediment rises, and the pool is discoloured. Whereas, Christ may be compared to a fountain, that is all transparency, and pure to the very bottom; which, however shaken, however disturbed, is nothing but fluid crystal; permanently and invariably clear.

It was a small thing for the blessed Jesus, to have no depraved propensity; he was born in a state of consummate rectitude, and adorned with all the beauties of holiness. "Holiness to the Lord" was inscribed, not on the mitre, but on the heart of our great High Priest. Therefore he is styled, by the angelic harbinger of his birth, "That Holy Thing."† —In the prophecy of Zechariah, the dignity of our Redeemer's nature, and the perfection of his obedience, are displayed by the similitude of a stone,‡ adorned with exquisite engraving; wrought, not by Bezaleel or Aholiab, though divinely inspired artists,

* 1 Pet. ii. 22.

† Luke i. 35.—Which is spoken, in contradistinction to the state of all other births; and implies the universal prevalence of original corruption, this one instance only excepted. For, if other infants were holy at their first formation, and made after the image of God, this remark had been trivial and impertinent, if not droll and burlesque; like saying with great solemnity, "The child shall have a mouth and a head; aye, and eyes in the one, and lips to the other."

‡ Zech. iii. 9. "Behold the stone that I have laid before Joshua: upon one stone shall be seven eyes; behold! I will engrave the graving thereof, saith the Lord of hosts, and I will remove the iniquity of that land in one day."

but by the finger of Jehovah himself; and more highly finished, than it is possible for human skill to equal, or human thought to conceive.

The whole tenor of our Lord's conduct, was a living exemplification of piety and morality, in their most extensive branches, and most amiable forms. Saints of the highest attainments, have fallen short of the glory of God; have been far from reaching the exalted standard of his precepts. But Christ failed in no point, came short in no degree.—We formerly observed the great sublimity, and vast extent of the divine law. From whence appears the extreme difficulty, nay the utter impossibility of our justification, on account of any duties performed by ourselves. How should we rejoice then to contemplate the vicarious righteousness of our condescending and adorable Surety? As the mercy seat was exactly commensurate to the dimensions of the ark; so did our Lord's obedience most fully quadrate with all and every demand of the divine law. It flowed from those best of principles, supreme love to God, and unfeigned affection to mankind.

From those two capital sources, let us trace our Lord's obedience, through some little part of its illustrious progress. His delight in God was conspicuous, even from his early years. The sacred solemnities of the sanctuary, were more engaging to his youthful mind, than all the entertainments of a festival.—When he entered upon his ministry, whole nights were not too long for his copious devotions. The lonely retirements of the deserts, as affording opportunity for undisturbed communion with God, were more desirable to Christ, than the applauses of an admiring world.

So ceaseless and transcendent was his love to God, that he never sought any separate pleasure of his own; but always did those things which were pleasing in his Father's sight. His own will was entirely absorbed in the will of the Most High; and “it was his meat and drink,” refreshing and delightful as the richest

food, or as royal dainties, "to finish the work that was given him to do."*

So entirely devoted to the honour of God, that a zeal for his house, and for the purity of his ordinances, is represented, by the evangelical historian, as "eating him up."† Like a heavenly flame glowing in his breast, it sometimes fired him with a graceful indignation; it sometimes melted him into godly sorrow; and, by exerting itself in a variety of vigorous efforts, consumed his vital spirits.

So active and unremitted was the obedience of the blessed Jesus, that the sun did not enter upon his race with a more constant assiduity, nor dispatch his business with greater expedition; and sure I am, that radiant luminary never dispensed beams, half so bright or a thousandth part so beneficial. Short was his span, but how grand and extensive were his services! So grand, that they bring more glory to God, than all the administrations of providence, and the phenomena of nature. So extensive, that they spread, in their gracious efficacy, to the ends of the earth, and to the closing period of time. Nay, they will diffuse their blessed influence even to the celestial world, and have no other limits of their duration than the ages of eternity.

Most affectionately concerned for the welfare of mankind, he spent his strength, not barely in relieving them, when his aid was implored; but in seeking the afflicted, and offering his assistance. With great fatigue,‡ he travelled to remote cities; and with no less

* John iv. 34.

† John ii. 17.

‡ Jesus being weary with his journey, *καθεζέτο εἰως*, John iv. 6. *εἰως* is thus explained by a Greek commentator, *ὠπλως, και ως εἰυχε*. Our Lord sat down, without ceremony and without complaint, even on the rough place: contented to use it, just as he found it; neither desiring a softer seat, nor wishing for any better accommodation.—I rather think, the adverb refers to the preceding adjective *κειοπιακως*, which signifies a state of very great fatigue; weakening a person to such a degree, that he can hardly walk with steady steps, or even sit in a right attitude. The sacred historian seems to mean, that our Lord sat in such a posture, as spoke the lassitude of his body; declared

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condescension, he visited the meanest villages, that all might have the benefit and comfort of his presence. Though multitudes of miserable objects were brought to him from every quarter, yet he was pleased even to prevent the wishes of the distressed, and “went about doing good.”

He gave sight*, and all the agreeable scenes of nature, to the blind; health, and all the choice comforts of life, to the diseased. He expelled malevolent raging demons; and restored, what is more precious than the light of the body, or the vigour of the constitution, the calm possession of the intellectual faculties.—What greatly surpassed all the preceding blessings, he released the wretched soul from the dominion of darkness, from the tyranny of sin. He made his followers partakers of a divine nature, and prepared them for a state of never-ending bliss.

Such priceless treasures of wisdom and beneficence flowed from his tongue, and were poured from his hands!—How different those triumphs of mercy, from the trophies erected, by wild ambition, in the bloody field! If heathens celebrated those mighty butchers, who made cities their slaughter-house; made half the globe their shambles; and measured their merit by the devastations they spread; how should christians admire their heavenly Benefactor, who rose upon a wretched world, with healing under his wings; who distributed, far and near, the unspeakably rich gifts of knowledge and holiness, of temporal happiness and eternal joy!

Nor were these righteous acts his strange work, but his repeated, his hourly, his almost incessant em-

the failure of his spirits; and shewed him to be spent with the heat of the day, and the toil of travelling. Which circumstance gives a most beautiful heightening to his charity and zeal, so generously and so successfully exerted in the following circumstance.

* *Εχαρσατο το βλεπειν*, is the delicate and noble expression of the evangelist, Luke vii. 21. “He made them a present of sight.” Silver and gold had he none: but these were his gifts, such were his alms.

Christ's righteousness.

ploy. Sometimes we see him teaching in private-houses, or bringing forth the good things of his gospel on the deck of a ship. At other times, he takes a mountain for his pulpit; the heavens are his sounding-board; and all that have ears to hear, are invited to be his audience.—Does he lay aside this solemn office? It is only to carry on the same design, in a more condescending and familiar manner. If he meets with the pharisees, he discovers their errors, and re-proves their vices; he confutes their objections, and (in case they are not absolutely inaccessible to the wise counsel) rectifies their mistakes. If he vouchsafes to be present at a feast, he furnishes the richest, incomparably the richest part of the treat. “Honey and milk are under his tongue.”* He inculcates lowliness of mind on the vain;† he recommends disinterested charity to the selfish;‡ and promises pardon to the weeping penitent.§—Is he retired from other company, and surrounded only by his chosen attendants? His conversation is a sermon. Whether he sit in the inner chamber, or travel on the public road, or walk through the corn-fields, he is still prosecuting his great work; training up his disciples for their sacred function; and imparting to them, what they may communicate to others.—Is he retired from all company? Even then he does not discontinue his labours of love, but adds the fervent intercessions of the night, to the charitable toils of the day. Yes, when all but himself lay sunk in soft repose, this Advocate for a guilty world was engaged in an exercise of benevolence; which, though secret and unobserved as the falling dews, was far more beneficial to our best interests, than those pearly drops to the languishing herbs.

Most charming and unparalleled benignity! He forgot his daily food, neglected his necessary rest, to spend and be spent for the salvation of mankind.

* Cant. iv. 11.

† Luke xiv. 8.

‡ Luke xiv. 11.

§ Luke vii. 48.

The admirable perfection of

Neither the hardships of continual self-denial, nor the calumnies of envenomed tongues, could divert him from pursuing this favourite business.—He sought none of your honours, coveted none of your rewards, O ye children of men! What he sought, what he coveted, was, to wear out his life in your service, and lay it down for your ransom. This was all his desire, and this indeed he desired earnestly. He longed, (beneficent, blessed Being!) he longed for the fatal hour. He severely rebuked one of his disciples, who would have dissuaded him from going as a volunteer to the cross. He was even straitened,* under a kind of holy uneasiness, till the dreadful work was accomplished; till he was baptized with the baptism of his sufferings, bathed in blood, and plunged in death.

By this most meritorious obedience and death, what did he not deserve; what did he not procure? He procured those inestimable blessings, the pardon of sin, and reconciliation with God; procured them (O! love unmerited and unmeasurable!) for prodigals, for traitors, for rebels.—To this it is owing, that we, who were enemies against God, may call the King of heaven our Father; may have free access to him in all our difficulties; and may hope to reign with him in everlasting glory.

Was ever goodness like this goodness?† Were ever

* Luke xii. 50. The original word *συνεχομαι*, seems to express the condition of a person wedged in, on every side, by a tumultuous throng of people. His hands are hampered, and his body is confined in a moving prison; he is crushed in, and hurried to and fro, he pants for breath, and is almost stifled in the crowd. How must such a one long to be disengaged from these very uneasy circumstances! With equal ardour did our most beneficent Lord desire those sufferings, which were to overwhelm him with distress, but exalt us to happiness; were to bathe his limbs in blood, but cleanse our souls from sin.—Οι οχλοι, says the same historian, *συνεχασι σε και αποθλιβουσι*, Luke viii. 45.

† Codrus, it is true, devoted himself to death for the Athenians; and Curtius threw himself into the yawning gulf, for the preservation of the Romans.—But these died, being mere creatures, and guilty creatures: whereas the dying Jesus was perfectly innocent, and supremely glorious.—These died only a little before their time: but

blessings comparable to these blessings, or purchased with such price? Hide, hide your diminished heads, ye little transitory donations of silver and gold. The riches of a thousand mines bestowed to feed the hungry and clothe the naked, are the most contemptible trifles, if mentioned with the charity of the teaching, the healing, the bleeding Jesus. Kingdoms given away in alms, if viewed with this infinitely noble beneficence, would make just the same figure, as a spark from the summer-hearth, under the potent and boundless blaze of noon.—This is indeed “love that passeth knowledge.”*

Amidst all these miracles of power and of love, (any one of which would have entitled him to universal admiration, and everlasting honour,) how humble was our Saviour! O humility—virtue dear to the most high God, and peculiarly amiable in men—never didst thou appear in so charming a dress, or so striking a light.

At his birth, not accommodated with a magnificent palace, but lodged in a stable, and laid in a manger.—As he advanced in years, not attended with a royal

Christ died, though he had life in himself, and none could have taken it from him, had he not voluntarily resigned it.—These died for their valuable friends, for their affectionate relations, for their native country: but Christ died for slaves, for enemies, for the ungodly.—They died an honourable death: but Christ submitted to the most ignominious execution; Christ died under the imputation of horrid crimes, and in the form of an execrable malefactor.—In all these instances, as the heavens are higher than the earth, so is Christ's love greater than their love; his philanthropy than their patriotism.

* Eph. iii. 19. This expression, as also the principal circumstance of superiority hinted in the preceding note, and founded on the divinity of our Lord. And indeed the expression is scarce justifiable, the assertion is hardly true, upon any other supposition. A creature dying for a creature, is, though great, yet not incomprehensible goodness. But, when we view the sufferings of Christ, and the blessings of redemption, surrounded with all the splendour of the Deity; they dazzle our understanding, and fill us with holy astonishment. They appear to be the effects of a love, never to be spoken of but in the language of wonder, never to be thought of but with an extasy of delight.

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equipage, or supplied from a royal revenue; but labouring with his own hands, and earning his bread by the sweat of his brow.—When he entered upon his ministerial office, not the least ostentatious parade appeared in the performance of all his wonderful works. So far, so very far from affecting the acclamations of the populace, that he often imposed silence on those unspeakably-indebted lips, which were ready to overflow with praise, and would fain have been the trumpets of his fame.

Though a voice from heaven proclaimed him the Beloved of his almighty Father; he disdained not to own the ignoble character of the carpenter's son.* Though Prince of the kings of the earth, he condescended to wash the feet of mean fishermen, and vile sinners.† Though Proprietor and Lord of the whole world, he was content to be more destitute than the fowls of the air, or the foxes of the desert.‡ more destitute (astonishing abasement!) than the most insignificant and most hated animals.

Grandeur, we find, is apt to beget expectations of superior regard; gives a keener edge to every affront, and renders the mind more tenderly sensible of every disrespect. But our Lord's meekness was as great as his dignity; and that throughout a series of such unsufferable provocations, as were equalled by nothing, but the sweetness of his forgiving grace.

When rudely affronted, he calmly bore, and kindly overlooked, the insult.—When contradicted by petulant and presumptuous sinners, he endured with the utmost serenity of temper, their unreasonable cavils, and their obstinate perverseness.—When his invitations, his most endearing invitations, were ungratefully and stubbornly rejected; instead of remitting, he renewed them; and, with still warmer affection, impertuned his hearers, not to forsake their own mercies, nor to forego their own felicity.—When all the winning arts of persuasion were ineffectual, he added his tears

* Matt. xiii. 55.

† John xiii. 14.

‡ Matt. viii. 20.

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to his slighted intreaties; and lamented as a brother, when scornfully repulsed as teacher.

Though his disciples slept, stupidly slept, when his bitter cries pierced the clouds, and were enough to awaken the very stones into compassion; did their divine but slighted Master resent their unkindness? Did he refuse to admit an excuse for their neglect? yea, he made their excuse: "The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak."*—When his enemies had nailed him to the cross, as the basest slave, and most flagitious malefactor; when they were glutting their malice with his torments and blood; and spared not to revile him, even in his last expiring agonies; far, very far from being exasperated, this Hero of heaven repaid all their contempt and barbarity, with the most fervent and effectual supplication in their behalf. "Father, forgive them," was his prayer: "for they know not what they do,"† was his plea.

Nor was his resignation less exemplary than his meekness. He went out to meet afflictions, when they came in his Father's name, and commissioned from his Father's hand. He gave, without the least reluctance, his back to the smiters, and hid not his face from shame and spitting. Though his soul, his very soul was penetrated with the keenest sensations of anguish; yet no impatient thought discomposed his mind, no murmuring word forced its way from his lips. "Father, not my will, but thine be done,"‡ was his language, when the sorrows of death compassed him, and pains, inexpressibly severer than the pains of dissolution, came upon him. "When they gaped upon him with their mouth, and smote him upon his cheek reproachfully. When his face was foul with spitting, and on his eyelids was the shadow of death. When God delivered him to the ungodly, and turned him over into the hands of the wicked. Yea, when the Almighty set him for the mark of his arrows, and brake him with breach upon breach. When the

* Matt. xxvi. 41.

† Luke xxiii. 34.

‡ Luke xxii. 43.

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weapons of his wrath cleft his very reins asunder, and poured his gall upon the earth.* Amidst all this exquisite distress, he sinned not by the least irregular perturbation; but bowed his head, and dutifully kissed the divine rod, and cordially blessed his very murderers.

Thus did the whole choir of active and passive virtues abound and shine in our Lord; abound with the richest variety, and shine with the highest lustre; infinitely surpassing that curious assemblage of costly gems, which studded the Aaronic breast-plate;† and, as far as earthly things can represent heavenly, typified the splendour and perfection of our Redeemer's righteousness.

In all this, he acted and he suffered, as God's righteous servant, and as his people's righteous Surety.—By all this, he fulfilled every jot and tittle of the divine law: nay, he more than fulfilled, he magnified it. He gave it (if I may apply the most beautiful allusion that ever was used, to the most momentous subject that ever was discussed) “good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over.”‡

He defied the most vigilant of his enemies to convince him of sin.—A more malignant, a far more sagacious adversary than the scribes and pharisees, could detect no blemish in our Lord Jesus. The prince of *this* world, that infernal tyrant; who had deceived and enslaved all the nations of the earth, “came and found nothing in him;”§ not the least defect in his obedience.

“He hath done all things well,”|| was the general

* These tragical images are borrowed from the book of Job, who was an eminent type of a suffering Saviour; and though they are the very eloquence of woe, they do not exaggerate, they cannot express, that inconceivable anguish, which wrung a bloody sweat from our blessed Master's body, and forced from his lips that melancholy exclamation, “My soul is sorrowful,—exceeding sorrowful,—sorrowful even unto death.” See Job xvi.

† Exod. xxviii. 17, 18, 19, 20.

‡ Luke vi. 38.

§ John xiv. 30.

|| Mark vii. 37.

acclamation of mankind; or, as the words may be rendered, he hath done all things finely and gracefully;* with every circumstance that can constitute the propriety and dignity, the utility and beauty of action.

“I have glorified thee on earth,”† was his own profession before the most high God. I have glorified thee, in all that I acted, in all that I uttered, in all that I suffered. I have displayed the magnificence of thy Majesty, the riches of thy grace, and the honours of all thy attributes. Inasmuch, that “whoso seeth me, seeth the Father;”‡ whoever is properly acquainted with my person and my work of redemption, sees the invisible and knows the incomprehensible Deity; sees his venerable, his amiable, his adorable perfections, in the clearest mirror, and in the brightest light.§

God also, who is the supreme standard and unerring judge of excellency, bore his testimony to our blessed Mediator. He spoke it once, yea twice, and with a voice from heaven — In the constitution of the material world, when it came forth from the Creator’s hand, Omniscience could discern no flaw. Neither could justice itself, upon the strictest inquiry, discover any failure in the obedience of our Surety. As therefore it was said, concerning the works of creation, “They are all very good;”|| so it was said, concerning our Saviour, and by the same almighty Majesty, “In him I am well pleased.”¶

You took notice, and very justly, how much the productions of nature exceed and eclipse the attempts of human skill. We are pleased with the performances of the painter: but do they equal the native

* Καλως.

† John xvii. 4.

‡ John xii. 45.

§ Therefore Christ is said to be *απαντασμα της δοξης*. Heb. i. 3. In other objects, we have only some obscure footsteps, or dim traces; here we have the glory of the Godhead. And not barely the glory, but the very brightness of the Father’s glory; or, all the divine perfections beaming forth with adequate, that is, with ineffable and infinite splendour.

|| Gen. i. 31.

¶ Matt. iii. 17.

blush of the rose, or the artless glow of a pea-blossom? We are charmed with a fine piece of enamelling, but is it fit to be compared with the natural polish of a thousand shells which are formed in the ocean, or a thousand seeds which spring from the earth? We admire the virtues of the ancient saints; men "that were honoured in their generation, and the glory of their times."* We admire the meekness of Moses, and the magnanimity of Elijah, the exalted piety of Isaiah, and the enlarged wisdom of Daniel; the active spirit of Joshua, and the passive graces of Jeremiah,—what proportion, (put them all together,) what proportion do they all bear to his obedience, "who is gone into heaven, angels, and authorities, and powers being made subject unto him?"† who is called the Holy One and the Just;‡ not only by way of emphasis, but by way of exclusion; because no person is worthy of the character, no duties deserve to be mentioned, when Christ and his merits are under consideration.

If then we talk of merit, what merit must there be in such immaculate sanctity of soul, and such exemplary holiness of conduct; such ardent zeal for God, and such compassionate good-will to man; such consummate worthiness, and extensive usefulness; such as were utterly unknown before; have been absolutely unequalled since; and never will, nor can be paralleled throughout all ages!—O my Theron! what is the drop of a bucket to the unfathomable waves of the ocean? What is a grain of sand to the unmeasurable dimensions of the universe? What is an hour or a moment to the endless revolutions of eternity? Such are all human endowments, and all human attainments, compared with his righteousness, who is "fairer than the children of men"§ "the chiefest among ten thousand;"|| "and who received not the Spirit by measure."¶

* Ecclus. xlv. 7.

† 1 Pet. iii. 22.

‡ Acts iii. 14.

§ Psa. xlv. 2.

|| Cant. v. 13.

¶ John ii. 34.

Christ's righteousness.

Think not, that what I have written is the language of rant. It is a paraphrase, though, I must confess, but a scanty paraphrase on David's practice, and David's faith. "My mouth shall shew forth thy righteousness and thy salvation all the day,"* for I know not the numbers thereof. The glorious righteousness of Christ, and the great salvation obtained thereby, he declares, shall be the chosen, the principal subject of his discourse. And not on a sabbath only, but on every day of the week, of the year, of his life. And not barely at the stated returns of solemn devotion, but in every social interview, and all the day long.—Why will he thus dwell, perpetually and invariably

* Psa. lxxi. 15. I cannot but observe, that righteousness and salvation are frequently connected, by the author of the psalms, and by the prophet Isaiah: in order to intimate, that the one is founded on the other; the latter derives its origin from the former; there can be no salvation without a righteousness, a real, proper, law-fulfilling righteousness.—At the same time I am sensible, that the word righteousness may signify God's goodness in making, and faithfulness in performing, his promises unto David. Salvation may likewise denote the delivery of that afflicted hero from all his persecutors, and his establishment on the throne of Israel.

But if we should confine the sense to these narrow limits, how comfortless the favour even to David himself, considered as an immortal being? How much more insignificant to us and others, on whom the ends of the world are come! And how very unworthy of that infinite God, who is the Father of the spirits of all flesh! who sees at one view, whatever is, or has been, or shall exist; who therefore, when he speaks, speaks to all his children, in every period of time, and in every nation under heaven. As much as a tutor, when delivering his lectures, addresses himself to all his pupils, whether they sit at his right hand or his left, before him or on every side.

Whereas if righteousness signifies the meritorious obedience of Christ, and salvation implies the benefits of his redemption, the sense is no longer shrivelled, impoverished, and mean; but rich, august, and magnificent. It pours consolation among all people, kindreds, and tongues. It is worthy of that God, who seeth the things and regardeth the persons which are not, as though they were. It comports exactly with that revelation, in which Christ is the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, the sum total.

This note is already too long; otherwise I should take leave to gratify my inclination, and give a sanction to my sentiment, by transcribing Vitrina's exposition of Isaiah xlv. 8.

The admirable perfection of

dwell, on this darling theme? Because he knew no end thereof. It is impossible to measure the value, or exhaust the fulness of these blessings. The righteousness is unspeakable, the salvation is everlasting. To compute the duration of the one, numbers fail; to describe the excellency of the other, words are at a loss.

And is this righteousness designed for us? Is this to be our wedding-dress, this our beautiful array, when we enter the regions of eternity? Unspeakable privilege!—Is this what God has provided to supply, more than supply our loss in Adam? Boundless benignity!—Shall we be treated by the Judge of the world, as if we had performed all this un sinning and perfect obedience? Well might the prophet cry out, like one lost in astonishment, “How great is his goodness!—Is not your heart enamoured, my dear Theron, with a view of this incomprehensibly-rich grace? What so excellent, what so comfortable, what so desirable, as this gift of a Saviour’s righteousness! Though delineated by this feeble pen, methinks it has dignity and glory enough, to captivate our hearts and fire our affections; fire them with ardent and inextinguishable desires after a personal interest and property in it.—O! may the eternal Spirit reveal our Redeemer’s righteousness, in all its heavenly beauty and divine lustre! Then, I am sure, we shall esteem it above every thing; we shall regard it as the one thing needful; we shall count all things in comparison of it, worthless as the chaff, and empty as the wind.

To an immortal and fallen soul, every thing else is empty as the wind; but here sinners may “suck and be satisfied with this breast of consolations;” yea, thousands and thousands of millions may “milk out, and be delighted with the abundance of its glory.”*—Here we shall find the doctrine of supererogation no longer a chimera, but a delightful reality. Here in-

* Isa. lxvi. 11.

Christ's righteousness.

deed is an immense surplusage, an inexhaustible fund of merit,* sufficient to enrich a whole world of indigent and miserable creatures; sufficient to make their cup run over with a superabundant fulness of peace and joy, so long as time shall last, and when time shall be no more. For to use the apostle's weighty argument, "if by one man's offence, death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace, and of the gift of righteousness, shall reign in life by one Jesus Christ."† If one offence, committed by one mere man, made all his posterity chargeable with guilt, and liable to death; how much more shall the manifold instances of our divine Redeemer's obedience; of his long, uninterrupted, consummate righteousness;—how much more shall they absolve all his people from condemnation and punishment, and entitle them to the honours and joys of immortality!

Which will appear in a clear light, if to the perfection of his obedience, we add the majesty of his person. A proper subject this for some future letter. In the mean time, let me desire my friend, the friend of my bosom, to contemplate our Lord Jesus under the lovely and august character, "Glorious in holiness."‡ And, for my part, I will not cease to pray, that a sense of this supereminently grand and precious righteousness may be written on my Theron's heart. On those living tables, may it be like figures cut on a rock of solid marble, or inscribed on the bark of a growing tree; be lasting in its duration as the former, and

* Yet here is no rich fund, (as a learned writer asserts) no fund at all, for the pope's treasury of meritorious supererogating actions: unless Christ and the pope are to be placed upon the same footing; unless the ineffably excellent obedience of a dying Redeemer, and the miserably defective duties of sinful men, are to be deemed equally valuable.—Since this will hardly be admitted by protestants; I believe Aspasio may safely call the obedience of Christ, the true supererogation; as Mr. Ambrose has called the blood of Christ, the true purgatory.

† Rom. v. 17.

‡ Exod. xv. 11.

The admirable perfection of Christ's righteousness.

spreading in its influence as the latter.—It will then be a sure proof, that his name is written in the book of life; and it shall then be a pleasing pattern for
the affection,
the gratitude,
and the friendship, of his

ASPASIO.

P. S. You give a most astonishing account of the pressure of the atmosphere. Astonishing indeed! that we should be continually surrounded, continually overwhelmed, with such a tremendous load; and not be crushed to death, no, nor be sensible of the least weight.—This, I think, may serve to represent the state of a sinner, unawakened from carnal security. Loads, more than mountainous loads of guilt, are upon his soul, and he perceives not the burden. For this reason, he is under no apprehensions of the vengeance and fiery indignation, which he deserves; he has no superlative esteem for the atonement and merits of the Redeemer, which alone can deliver him from the wrath to come. But, if once his conscience feels, what his lips, perhaps, have often repeated: “We do earnestly repent us of these our misdoings; the remembrance of them is grievous unto us, the burden of them is intolerable;” then how will he prize such a text: “The Lord laid on Christ the iniquity of us all!” How will he long for an interest in the Lamb of God, “which taketh away the sin of the world!” Then that Jesus who has “finished the transgression, and brought in everlasting righteousness,” will be all his salvation, and all his desire.

The life of Joseph, one of the finest pieces of sacred history.

LETTER VIII.

ASPASIO TO THERON.

Dear Theron,

I HAVE just been reading that exquisitely fine piece of sacred history, the life of Joseph. A history,—filled with surprising incidents, and unexpected revolutions;—adorned with the most heroic instances of triumphant virtue, both amidst all the allurements of temptation, and under the pressures of affliction:—animated with such tender and pathetic, such melting and alarming touches of natural eloquence, as every reader must feel, and every true critic will admire.

When I came to that remarkable injunction, with which the generous viceroy dismissed his brethren; “Ye shall tell my father of all my glory in Egypt;”*—I paused,—I pondered,—I was struck. Certainly this was enjoined, not by way of ostentation; but on account of the pleasure which he knew it would yield the good old patriarch.—Was it some kind prompting angel, or the voice of gratitude and devotion, that whispered in my ear? “Should not the children of men likewise tell one another of all the glory,† which

* Gen. xlv. 13.

† To see the glory of Christ, is the grand blessing which our Lord solicits and demands for his disciples, in his solemn intercession, John xvii. 24. It is that which will complete the blessedness of heaven, and fill its inhabitants with joy unspeakable and glorious.—Surely, then, we should endeavour to anticipate, in some degree, that celestial bliss, and habituate our souls to this sacred exercise, which will be our business and our reward to endless ages.

Should the reader desire assistance in this important work, I would refer him to a little treatise of Dr. Owen's, entitled, *Meditations on the Glory of Christ*. 'Tis little in size, not so in value. Was I to speak of it in the classical style, I should call it, “aureus, gemmeus, mellitus.” But I would rather say, it is richly replenished with unction

A promise to resume the subject of Christ's righteousness.

their Redeemer possesses in heaven and on earth? Will not this afford them the sublimest pleasure here, and be a source of the most refined satisfaction for ever and ever?"

Though I had almost determined to write no more, till you could make a demand upon the foot of value received, willingly I recede from my intended resolution, and obey this pleasing hint.—But “who can declare the noble acts of the Lord Jesus Christ, or shew forth all his praise?”—However, if I may but lisp out his adorable name, and present my friend with a glimpse, or a broken view of his divine perfections, even this will be desirable and delightful; far more desirable and delightful, than to behold Rome in its magnificence, St. Paul in the pulpit, or king Solomon on his throne.*

Let me take the lark for my pattern; which, as I was lately returning from an evening ramble, attracted my observation.—Warbling her Creator's praise, she mounted in the serene sky. Still she warbled, and still she mounted, as though she meant to carry her tribute of harmony unto the very gates of heaven. Having reached, at last, her highest elevation, and perceiving herself at an immense distance from the starrý mansions, she dropped on a sudden to the earth; and discontinued, at once, both to sing and to soar. Now the morning appears, and is awakening the world, our little songster retunes her throat, and re-exerts her wings.—As I have endeavoured, very imperfectly endeavoured, to strike out a shadowy draught of our Lord's complete obedience; I would, though unequal to the task, once more resume my pen, and attempt—nothing like a display, but only a faint sketch of his essential dignity.

from the Holy One, which tends to enlighten the eyes, and to cheer the heart: which sweetens the enjoyments of life, softens the horrors of death, and prepares for the fruitions of eternity.

* These, if I remember right, are the three things, which St. Augustine declared, would, of all others, most eminently gratify his curiosity.

Description of a drought.

First let me observe, that, for some time past, we have been visited with the most uncomfortable weather; dewless nights, and sultry days. The firmament was more like a glowing furnace, than the region of refreshing rain.—The earth lay parched with thirst, and chapped with heat. The meadows were drained of their humidity, and all the flowers hung their fading heads.—The streams, which used to flow parallel with the verdant margin, abandoned their banks; and sunk, diminished and discoloured, to the bottom of their oozy channels. Nature in general seemed to be resigning the “robe of beauty, for the garment of heaviness.” Drought was in all our borders; and famine, we feared, was not far behind. Though clouds of dust obscured the air, tarnished the hedges, and almost smothered the traveller; yet not one cloud of fleecy white appeared, to variegate the blue expanse, or give us hopes of a reviving shower.*

It reminded me of that awful threatening, denounced by Moses on a wicked people: “The heaven, that is over thy head, shall be brass, and the earth, that is under thee, shall be iron.”† It made me apprehensive of that terrible state, which the prophet so emphatically describes: “The field is wasted, and the land mourneth. The seed is rotten under the clods, and the harvest perisheth. The garners are laid desolate, and the barns are broken down.—The new wine is dried up; the oil languisheth; and all the trees of the field are withered.—How do the beasts groan! the herds of cattle are perplexed. Yea, the flocks of

* At such a juncture, how pertinent is the question, proposed by the almighty Majesty! Job xxxviii. 37, 38. “Who can number,” muster or arrange, “the clouds in wisdom?” so as to have them ready at hand, on any emergency. “And who can empty those bottles of heaven,” in copious but seasonable effusions upon the earth, “when,” as in the case described above, “the dust” of the road is “attenuated into powder, בצקת למוצק and the clods” of the valley “are glued fast together, דבקן.”

† Deut. xxviii. 23.

Grandeur of the sun after a night of rain.

sheep are made desolate. Because the rivers of waters are dried up, and the fire hath devoured the pastures of the wilderness.*—But, blessed be the divine Providence, our fears are vanished, and a most joyful change has taken place. The Lord hath “sent a gracious rain upon his inheritance, and refreshed it when it was weary.”†

Yesterday in the afternoon, the wind shifting to the south, roused the dormant clouds, and brought some of those agreeable strangers on its wings.—At first, they came sailing in small, and thin, and scattered parties. Anon, the flying squadrons advanced in larger detachments, more closely wedged, and more deeply laden. Till, at last, the great rendezvous completed, they formed into a body of such depth, and extended their wings with such a sweep, as darkened the sun, and overspread the whole hemisphere.

Just at the close of day, the gales which escorted the spongy treasures, retired; and consigned their charge to the disposal of a profound calm. Not a breeze shook the most tremulous leaf. Not a curl ruffled the smooth expansive lake. All things were still, as in attentive expectation. The earth seemed to gasp after the hovering moisture. Nature, with her suppliant tribes, in expressive pleading silence, solicited the falling fruitfulness; nor pleaded long, nor solicited in vain.

The showers, gentle, soft, and balmy, descend. The vessels of heaven unload their precious freight, and enrich the penurious glebe. Through all the night, the liquid sweetness, incomparably more beneficial than trickling silver, distils: shedding herbs, and fruits, and flowers.—Now the sun, mild and refulgent, issues through the portals of the east. Pleased, as it were, to have emerged from the late aggravated darkness, he looks abroad, with peculiar gaiety, and the most engaging splendours. He looks through the disburdened air, and finds a gladdened world, that

* Joel i. 1, &c.

† Psa. lxxviii. 9.

Grandeur of the sun after a night of rain.

wants nothing but his all-cheering beams, to render its satisfaction complete.

The glory comes!—Hail to thy rising ray,
Great lamp of light, and second source of day!
Who robe the world, each nipping gale remove,
Treat ev'ry sense, and beam creating love.*

At his auspicious approach, the freshened mountains lift their heads, and smile. The garden opens its aromatic stores; and breathes, as from a fuming altar, balm to the smell, and incense to the skies. The little hills, crowned with springing plenty, clap their hands on every side. The moistened plains, and irriguous valleys, laugh and sing. While their waters, lately exhausted, again “are made deep, and their rivers run like oil.”†

The whole earth, saturated with the bounty of heaven, and flushed with humid life, wears a thousand marks of gratitude and complacency. Washed by the copious rain, how bright and vivid is the universal verdure? The green carpet below may almost vie with the blue canopy above.—The forest, and every tree, burnish their colours, and array themselves in their finest apparel: which, as on a day of general festivity, is delicately decked with gems; gems of unsullied lustre, and of genial moisture. From every pasture, and from all the grove, the voice of pleasure and of melody resounds. While the officious zephyrs waft the floating harmony blended with native perfumes; gently waft them to the senses, and touch the very soul with transport.

Could there be a more brilliant appearance, or more exuberant demonstrations of joy, even to celebrate the anniversary of nature's birth? With what admirable propriety has the psalmist compared yonder

* These beautiful lines are borrowed from the Sea-piece, canto IV. A narratory, philosophical, and descriptive poem, written by my ingenious friend, Dr. Kirkpatrick.

† Ezek. xxxii. 14.

Grandeur of the sun after a night of rain,

orient sun, in all his sparkling grandeur, to a young exulting "bridegroom;"* who comes forth, with every heightened ornament from his chamber, to shew himself in the most distinguished period of his life, and to receive the blessing which consummates his happiness!

This most charming and equally majestic scene, recalls to my memory that fine description of the Messiah, extant in the last lovely strains of the Israelitish swan †—He shall be welcome and salutary "as the light of the morning; when the sun ariseth," to chase the malignant shades, and pour day through the reviving world. He shall be as the light of a morning, that is most serenely fair; without either storms to disturb, or clouds to obscure the glorious, the delightful dawn. Yea, his appearance shall be more beautiful, and his influences more beneficial, ‡ than the clear shining of that grand luminary, after a night of settled gloom, and showers of incessant rain. When his beams shed animating warmth, and vital lustre, on

* *Psa. xix. 5.*

† Israelitish swan—In allusion to those well-known lines of the poet,
Multa Dircaëum levat aura cygnum.

And not without a reference to the popular notion, that the swan sings the most melodious notes in its last moments. "*Fuit hæc facundi senis, quasi cygnea vox.*" *Tully.*

‡ "More beautiful, more beneficial, than the clear shining," *2 Sam. xxiii.*—Thus we have ventured to translate, or rather to paraphrase, the words מְנַנֵּה. That the prefix מ often occurs in the acceptance of comparative pre-eminence, is plain from a very remarkable passage in *Psalm xix. 10.* Where our inspired author, quite ravished with the love of the sacred oracles, declares, "they are desirable beyond gold, even beyond the droppings of the honey-comb."

If this sense is admitted, we shall have a fine comparison, and a grand advance upon it; acknowledging the insufficiency even of the strongest and brightest images, to represent the glory of Christ's kingdom, and the benignity of his administration.—Perhaps the translation may be too free and daring, and not approve itself to the exact critic. The sense, however, is unquestionably just; agreeable to the whole tenor of scripture; and can want no recommendation to the intelligent christian.

illustrative of the majesty of Christ, as the Lord of glory.

the tender grass impearled with dews, and on all the green treasures of the teeming earth.

As we have already contemplated the blessed Jesus, under the amiable character of the Just One; the foregoing passage of scripture represents him to our faith, in the more majestic quality of the Lord of Glory: or rather, unites the two grand peculiarities, which render him unparalleled in his personal, and all-sufficient in his mediatorial capacity.

Great, unspeakably great and glorious would our Saviour appear, if we had no other manifestations of his excellency, than those which preceded his mysterious incarnation.—In the ancient scriptures, he stands characterized, as the supreme object of God's ineffable complacency; vested with a glory, prior to the birth of time, or the existence of things; even "the glory which he had with the Father, before the world was."*—He is every where exhibited, as the ultimate desire of all nations; the sole hope of all the ends of the earth; the seed, of inestimable and universal importance, in whom all people, nations, and languages should be blessed.—In those royal, or rather divine acts and monuments, he is publicly recognized, as the Ruler of God's people: whose dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom from generation to generation. And how august, how venerable, is this Sovereign! since it was the highest honour of the most eminent saints, and renowned monarchs,† to act as his harbingers. The splendour of the temple, the richness of its ornaments, and the solemnity of its services, were the ensigns of his grandeur; were his sacred regalia, intended to usher him into the world with becoming state.

Every inspired prophet was his herald; deputed to blazon his perfections, or foretell his coming. Let us

* John xvii. 5.

† Moses, for instance, and Joshua, David, and Solomon, were types, strongly marked types, of our great Lawgiver and Deliverer, of our divine Ruler and Preacher.

The meritorious excellency of Christ's righteousness illustrated,

hear one speaking the sentiments of all.—“God the Saviour came from Teman, and the Holy One from mount Paran. His glory covered the heavens, and the earth was full of his praise.”* Thunders sounded his trumpet, and lightnings waved his banners. “Before him went the pestilence,” for the destruction of his enemies; but, for the deliverance of Israel, “he rode upon his horses and chariots of salvation. The mountains saw him, and they trembled; the everlasting hills, and they bowed their heads. The abyss uttered her voice,” and acknowledged his sovereignty through her deepest caverns, “the towering surges† lifted up their hands,” and remained in a suspended posture, while people passed through their opening lines.—Indeed, both depth and height, and every creature, have paid him homage, and done him service. And shall not we, my dear Theron, “submit to his righteousness?” Submit! Shall we not embrace it; rely on it; and, with joyful hearts, with triumphant tongues, say, “There is none, there is nothing like it?”‡

* See Hab. iii. The greatest part of which sublime ode refers to the wonderful works recorded by Moses and Joshua. It seems, especially in the exordium, to be an imitation of that grand and majestic description, with which the Jewish legislator introduces his last solemn benediction, Deut. xxxiii.—These works are by Aspasio ascribed to Christ. And, I think, it is demonstrably certain, that Jesus Christ is the Jehovah celebrated in the books of Moses, and in the writings of the prophets. It is Christ, who dwelt in the burning bush, and walked in the burning fiery furnace. It is Christ, who wrought the miracles in Egypt, and the wonders in the field of Zoan. The temporal deliverer, and the eternal Redeemer of Israel, are one and the same. He is that Captain of the hosts of the Lord, who gave the nations as dust to their sword, and as driven stubble to their bow, Josh. v. 14.—He is the mighty One, who punished the stout heart of the king of Assyria; who cut down the thickets of his forest, and lopped his bough with terror, Isa. x. 34.—He gave Moses his commission; gave Moses his law; and was both the Lord, and the end, of that sacred, significant, mysterious economy. Compare 1 Cor. x. 9. with Numb. xxi. 6, 7. See Dan. iii. 25. Heb. iii. 3, 4.

† רי which, I think, is put in opposition to רחוק and forms a beautiful contrast, verse 10.

‡ 1 Sam. xxi. 9.

from the magnificence of his works, and the divinity of his person.

Does not all mankind agree to estimate the merit of the practice, according to the dignity of the person? If a neighbour of inferior rank visit some poor afflicted wretch, in a coarse garret, and on a tattered bed, it is no very extraordinary favour. But if a lady of the first distinction, or a nobleman of the highest order, perform the same office; it is a much more remarkable, a much more admired instance of self-denying charity. On the foot of this calculation, to what a supereminent height will the worthiness of our Lord's obedience rise! It will rise, like some magnificent edifice, whose basis rests upon the centre; whose dimensions fill the hemisphere, and whose turrets glitter in the sky. Or rather, it will extend itself to immensity; where length, and breadth, and all dimensions, are lost. Especially, if we consider—the names he bears, and the honours he receives;—the works he has done, and those mightier works he is appointed to do.

The names he bears.—The title by which Jesus of Nazareth is distinguished in the heavenly world; the name written on his vesture, and on his thigh, is “King of kings, and Lord of lords.”*—The description, which the incomprehensible Jehovah gives of the Surety of sinful men, runs in this exalted strain, “The man that is My Fellow.”† Which the apostle explains, in that memorable and majestic clause, “He thought it no robbery to be equal with God.”‡—The

* Rev. xix. 16.

† Zech. xiii. 7. עִמִּיתִי *Contribulis vel coequalis*; my fellow, or my equal.—The original expression occurs no where, but in this verse of Zechariah, and in the book of Leviticus. In one text it is explained by brother, or partaker of the same nature. In every other place, I believe it would be found to signify, not barely a neighbour, but equal; one who stands upon the same level, with regard to the claims of equity, and the common rights of life.—In either sense, it militates strongly the divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ.

‡ Phil. ii. 6. Some writers, I am aware, have endeavoured to interpret away this evidence of our Lord's divine nature; but I think with great injury to the context, and no less violence to the phrase.

Ἀρπαγμός, as far as I can observe, denotes, not the prize or spoil,

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Holy Ghost, speaking by the great prophet Isaiah of the Virgin's Son, enumerates several grand distinctions, both of his person, and his office. He styles the child that should be born, the Wonderful Counsellor, the Everlasting Father, the Mighty God, the Prince of Peace.*—The same inspired writer, though eloquent above all orators, and more sublime than the loftiest poet, cries out in rapturous astonishment, "Who can declare his generation?"† What pencil can pourtray, what language can express, his matchless excellences? And may we not with equal propriety demand, Who can declare the meritorious perfection of his righteousness? It is precious beyond comparison; beyond imagination precious.

but the act of plundering or taking the spoil; "*ipsa rapiendi actio.*" Vide Steph. Thesaur. Græc. Ling.—If so, the text most naturally implies, that Christ counted it no act of robbery; no invasion of another's prerogative; but looked upon it as his unquestionable right, to be equal with God, and to receive divine honours.—Nevertheless (*αλλα*, Rom. v. 14.) he was so far from tenaciously insisting upon it, that he willingly relinquished the claim. He was content to forego the magnificent distinctions of the Creator, and to appear in the form of a creature: nay, to be made in the likeness of the fallen creatures; and not only to share the disgrace, but to suffer the punishment, due to the meanest and vilest among them all.—An example of humility, worthy to be displayed by the eloquence of an apostle, or the tongue of an archangel; worthy to be the everlasting pattern, and the everlasting praise, of all believers.

But however *απασιμος* be translated, the stress of the argument, I apprehend, lies upon the word *ισα*. If this signifies a real and proper equality, the proof seems, to me at least, irrefragable.—How shall we determine the exact significancy of this important word; by having recourse to Homer's works, or to heathen authors? This, in case the sacred writers will decide the question, is like going from Jerusalem to Athens for the solution of a religious doubt, even while the college of apostles is sitting at the former place.—The word occurs five or six times in their writings. They use it, it is true, in the adjective form; but the adjective is very sufficient to settle the signification of the adverb. If I know the meaning of *ισος*, I shall be at no loss to understand the import of *ισα*. See Matt. xx. 12. Luke vi. 34. John v. 18. Acts xi. 17. Rev. xxi. 16. In all which places it expresses not a bare resemblance or likeness only, but a real and proper equality.

* Isa. ix. 6.

† Isa. liii. 8.

from the magnificence of his works, and the divinity of his person.

The honours which our Lord receives, are proportioned to the illustrious characters which he sustains.—John the Baptist, than whom a greater prophet, or a better judge, was not born of a woman, professes himself unworthy “to stoop down and unloose the latchet of his shoes;”* unworthy, though a burning and shining light in his generation, to perform the meanest service to this Prince of heaven.—Stephen, who leads the van in the noble army of christian martyrs, beheld such a representation of his crucified Master’s glory, as enabled him to exult with divine delight, even amidst the furious assaults of his persecutors, and under the violent blows of his murderers.† Assured, that Jesus has all power in heaven and earth, by an act of the most solemn worship, he commits his departing soul, that most important of all trusts, to his Redeemer’s hand.‡—Nor by the first martyr alone, but in all churches of the saints, and in every age of christianity, has the Lord Jesus been addressed, as the constant object of his people’s adoration; and acknowledged, as the ever-faithful depository of their eternal interests.

When Isaiah beheld a visionary manifestation of Christ,§ the first-born sons of light were waiting around him, in postures of dutiful submission. These celestial beings, whose very feet were too bright for mortals to view, veil their faces before his infinite superior effulgence. The seraphs, who are all zeal, and all love, celebrate his perfections, and cry one to another, “The whole earth is full of his glory.”—The beloved disciple, in a vision no less clear, and far more magnificent, beholds the Lamb that was slain, standing in the midst of a resplendent throne; most beautifully adorned with a circling rainbow, and terribly dignified by the blaze of lightnings, and the sound of thunders. Before this august throne, and at the disposal of the once slaughtered Saviour, are “seven

* Mark i. 7. † Acts vii. 56. ‡ Acts vii. 59.

§ Isa. vi. 1, 2; &c. compared with John xii. 41.

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lamps of burning fire;" expressive of the divine Spirit, in all the variety of his miraculous gifts, and sanctifying graces.*—Four and twenty elders, clothed in white raiment, with crowns on their heads, and the harps of God in their hands, fall prostrate in deep homage before the Lamb. They strike the golden strings, and sing that sublime eucharistic hymn: "Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof; for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; and hast made us, unto our God, kings and priests.†

Behold the hierarchies of angels: they are in number ten thousand times ten thousand.—Hark! they raise their voice, and awaken all the powers of harmony.—Who is the subject, and what is the burden of their song? "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and blessing."—Nor these alone, but every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, join the immense chorus. They cry, in loud responsive strains of melody and devotion, "Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb, for ever and ever."‡

This, you observe, is the devout acknowledgment, not only of the cherubim, the seraphim, and the spirits of just men made perfect, but of every creature.—The sun, the moon, and the stars, which garnish the heavens;—beasts and creeping things, mountains and hills, fruit-trees, and all cedars, which replenish the earth:—metals and minerals, gems and fossils, the subterraneous riches of nature, or things which are under the earth;—even all those objects, which my Theron lately contemplated, do, in their way, magnify the Lord Jesus. They bear witness to his power, as their Creator; they are subservient

* Rev. iv. 5.

† Rev. v. 9, 10.

‡ Rev. v. 11, 12, 13.

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to his interest, as our Mediator; and, in this manner, they glorify his sacred name.

Under such views of the blessed Redeemer, enlarged and elevated even to astonishment, is it possible to over-rate the worth of his mediatorial obedience? Is it possible to lay too much stress on his expiatory sacrifice, or ascribe too much efficacy to his vicarious righteousness?

To the honours which he receives, let us add the works which he has done. By these, in the days of his flesh, were displayed the greatness of his glory, and the might of his majesty.

“Behold!” says the almighty Father; “my servant,” he who condescends to become my servant in the matchless work of redemption; “shall deal prudently,” shall conduct himself with all the dignity and all the sanctity of wisdom. In consequence of which, “he shall be exalted, be extolled, and be very high.”*—The paraphrase of the Jewish commentators on this beautiful climax is, though inadequate, not contemptible. “The Messiah,” they say, “shall be higher than Abraham, more illustrious than Moses, and exalted above the angels of light, even above the prime ministers† of heaven.”—What follows, is an attempt to render this exposition somewhat less defective.

Here, could you open my chamber door, and peep upon your friend, you would find him in the same attitude, and under the same perplexity, which were formerly observed in Phocion. Sitting one day amidst an assembly of the people, and preparing to make a public oration, he appeared uncommonly thoughtful. Being asked the reason, “I am considering,” said he, “how I may shorten, what I shall have occasion to speak.”—The compass of my subject would demand many volumes; whereas the limits of my letter will allow but a few paragraphs.

* Isa. lii. 13.

† Prime ministers, this is almost a literal translation of their words,
מלאכי השית

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Our Lord gave sight to the blind. He poured day upon those hopeless and benighted eyes, which had never been visited with the least dawning ray.—The dumb, at his command, found a ready tongue, and burst into songs of praise.—The deaf were all ear, and listened to the joyful sound of salvation.—The lame, lame from their very birth, threw aside their crutches, and, full of transport and exultation, leaped like the bounding roe.*—He restored floridity and beauty to the flesh, emaciated by consuming sickness, or encrusted with a loathsome leprosy.—All manner of diseases, though blended with the earliest seeds of life, and riveted in the constitution by a long inveterate predominancy;—diseases that baffled the skill of the physician, and mocked the force of medicine;—these he cured, not by tedious applications, but in the twinkling of an eye; not by costly prescriptions, but by a word from his mouth, or a touch from his hand; nay, by the fringe of his garment, or the bare act of his will.

Any one of these miracles had been enough to endear the character, and eternize the memory of an-

* We have the finest representation of this event, given us by the inspired historian, Acts iii. 8. "And he leaping up, stood, and walked, and entered with them into the temple; walking, and leaping, and praising God."—The very language seems to exult, in a redundant flow of expressive praises; just as a poor cripple, who never knew either the comfort of bodily vigour, or the pleasure of locomotion, may be supposed, to do, when suddenly and unexpectedly blessed with both. He would exert his new-acquired powers again and again; first in one attitude, then in another; sometimes to try, whether he was really healed, and not under the pleasing delusion of a dream; sometimes from a transport of conscious delight, and to express the sallies of joy that sprung up in his heart.

Though I acknowledge Mr. Pope's description to be extremely beautiful,

—————The lame their crutch forego,
And leap exulting like the bounding roe;

yet I cannot persuade myself, that it is to be compared with St. Luke's draught, either in the variety of figures; in the richness of colouring; or in that exuberance of style, which, on this occasion, is so happily significant, and so perfectly picturesque.

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other person. But they were common things, matters of daily occurrence, with our divine Master. The years of his public ministry were an uninterrupted series of such healing wonders; or, if any intermission took place, it was only to make way for more invaluable miracles of spiritual beneficence.

Behold him exercising his dominion over the vegetable creation. A fig-tree, adorned with the most promising spread of leaves, but unproductive of the expected fruit, withers away at his rebuke. It is not only stripped of its verdant honours, but dried up from the very roots,* and perishes for ever. A fearful, yet significant intimation of that final ruin, which will overtake the specious hypocrite; who, while lavish in outward profession, is destitute of inward piety.

His eye pierced through the whole world of waters; discerned the fish that had just swallowed a piece of silver coin, and guided its course to Peter's hook.† 'Tis true, when the gatherers of the sacred tax came, to collect his share for the reparation of the temple, he had not a sufficiency of money to satisfy so small a demand;‡ yet he takes occasion, from this most abject poverty, to manifest the immensity of his riches. He makes the great deep his revenue, and bids the scaly nations bring him their tribute. Never was such indigence associated with such magnificence! And never, never let us forget, that the indigence was ours, the magnificence all his own!

The waters themselves, it may be said, are far more unmanageable than their inhabitants. Who can control that outrageous element? which has de-

* Mark xi. 20.

† Matt. xvii. 27. How wonderful is this seemingly little miracle! or rather, what a cluster of wonders is comprised in this simple act! —That any fish, with money in its mouth, should be caught; with money just of such a value; and in the very first fish that offered itself! What a pregnant display of omniscience to know, of omnipotence to over-rule, all these fortuitous incidents!

‡ About fourteen-pence.

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stroyed so many gallant fleets, with the armies they bore; and which would laugh at the opposition of the united world.—The Lord Jesus walks upon its rolling surges,* and speaks its most tempestuous agitations into a calm. “The waters of the sea are mighty, and rage horribly; but yet the Lord, who loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, is mightier.†

The winds are yet more ungovernable than the madding ocean. When these are hurled‡ abroad, to shatter the forests, and shake the shores, who can curb their rage? what can withstand their impetuosity?—Even the boisterous winds hear the Saviour's voice; and, as soon as they hear, obey. His voice, more powerful to restrain, than brazen dungeons to confine, chides the furious whirlwind. The furious whirlwind is awed into immediate silence.§ That which a moment ago heaved the billows to the clouds,

* “He treadeth upon the waves of the sea,” is one of the prerogatives ascribed to the most high God, Job ix. 8. The original word כַּמִּית signifies a sea that rolls mountain high; and such, we have reason to suppose, were the waves on which our Lord walked; since the vessel to which he bent his course, was βοσανιζομενον lashed, battered, tormented, by their vehement concussion, Matt. xiv. 14.

† Psa. xciii. 5.

‡ This is the literal translation of that beautiful Hebrew phrase, which occurs Jonah i. 4.—The sacred writer, describing the stormy messenger, which was dispatched to arrest a fugitive servant, says קָטַל—The Lord hurled forth a great wind. The same expression is applied to Saul (1 Sam. xviii. 11.) when he darted his javelin at David, with a design to transfix and nail him to the wall.—What an elegant, and how awful an image! Storms and tempests, with all their irresistible fury and dreadful ravages, are like missile weapons in the hand of Jehovah; which he launches with greater ease and surer aim, than the most expert warrior emits the pointed steel.

§ Immediate—This circumstance, as very much aggrandizing the miracle, is, with great historical propriety, remarked by the evangelist. The sea is known to have a prodigious swell, and very tremendous agitations, for a considerable time after the tempestuous wind ceases. On this occasion, and in obedience to its Maker's will, it departs from the established laws of motion. No sooner is the word spoken, but there is a calm; not an advancing, but an instantaneous calm; not a partial, but a perfect calm. Matt. viii. 26. Mark iv. 39.

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and filled with outrage the howling firmament, now gently whispers among the shrouds, and scarcely curls the smooth expanse.

Something there is, even within the narrow compass of our own breasts, which affords room for more signal exertions of Deity, than the turbulent billows, or the resistless storm. Agreeably to the suggestion of a prophet; "For, lo! he that formeth the mountains; and createth the wind; and," as a more pregnant proof of divine perfection, "declareth unto man what is his thought, the God of hosts is his name,"* the possessor of such surpassing power and wisdom must unquestionably be the supreme Lord. And who is this, but Jesus Christ? "He knew what was in man."† He discerned the latent purpose, before it disclosed itself in action; even before it was uttered in speech; nay, while it lay yet an uninformed embryo in the mind.

His glance pierced into futurity; espied events, in all their circumstances,‡ and with the greatest perspicuity, before they came into being. The hidden things of darkness were open, and the contingencies of to-morrow were present, to his all-pervading eye. Nay, the unthought-of revolutions even of distant ages, the astonishing catastrophe of dissolving nature, and

* Amos iv. 13.

† John ii. 25. This all-discerning intelligence of the Deity, is very emphatically expressed by the psalmist, Psa. cxxxix. 1, 2, &c. though the sentiment in one clause seems to be somewhat weakened by our version. There is not a word in my tongue, would have a nobler turn, and more extensive meaning, if rendered, "Before the word is on my tongue, thou, O Lord, knowest it altogether."

‡ In all their circumstances.—See a very remarkable exemplification of this particular, Mark xiv. 13. There shall meet you, not barely a person, but the sex and age are both specified;—not two, or several, but one man;—not within any given space of time, but at the very instant of your arrival;—not empty-handed, but bearing a vessel;—not of wood or metal, but an earthen pitcher;—filled, not with wine or milk, but with water;—carrying it into that very house, where the preparation was made, and the passover was to be celebrated.—What a multitude of contingencies, all minutely foretold by our Lord!

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the awful process of everlasting judgment, he clearly foresaw, and particularly foretold.

Nor does he only penetrate the recesses, but overrule the operations of the soul. He so intimidated a multitude of sacrilegious wretches, that they fled, not before his drawn sword, or bent bow, but at the shaking of his simple scourge.*—He so awed by one short remonstrance, an assembly of conceited and ostentatious pharisees,† that they could neither gain-say, or endure the energy of his discourse. Though not to endure, was a tacit acknowledgment of guilt, and must cover them with public confusion.—With a word, the most mild and gentle imaginable,‡ he flung such terror into a band of armed men, as blasted all their courage, and laid them stunned and prostrate on the ground.

All "hearts are in his hand. He turneth them, as the rivers of water, whithersoever he will;"§ with as much ease, and with the same efficacious sway, as the current of the rivers is turned by every inflection of the channel. "Follow me," was his call to James and John: "Follow me,"|| was all he said to Levi the

* John ii. 14, 15, &c. St. Jerom looks upon this miracle as one of the greatest which our Saviour wrought. And indeed the circumstances are very extraordinary.—That one man should undertake so bold, and execute so hazardous a task;—one man, without a commission from Cesar; without any countenance from the Jewish rulers; without any arms, either to terrify the multitude or defend himself. That he should cast out the whole tribe of mercenary traffickers; wrest, from those worshippers of wealth, their darling idol; and trample under foot their great Diana.—And all, without tumult or opposition; not one of the sacrilegious rabble daring to "move the hand, or open the mouth, or peep."—Whoever reflects on the fierce and ungovernable nature of an incensed populace; or considers the bitter and outrageous zeal of Demetrius and the craftsmen, on a less irritating occasion; may possibly find himself almost, if not altogether, of the Latin father's opinion.

† John viii. 7.

‡ John xviii. 6.

§ Prov. xxi. 1.

|| Mark ii. 14. He said in the beginning, "Let there be light;" there was light: "Let there be a firmament;" 'twas spread abroad: "Let there be a world;" it arose out of nothing.—In the days of his flesh likewise he speaks, and it is done. His word is a work. He says to the disciples, "Follow me;" they come: to the leper, "Be

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publican. Though the first were engaged in all the ardour of business; though the last was sitting at the very receipt of custom; yet both he and they, without any demur, or the least delay, left their employ, left their nearest relations, and resigned their earthly all; to attend a poor and despised Master.—Their acquaintance, no doubt, would remonstrate a thousand inconveniences; their enemies would not fail to censure them, as rash enthusiasts; but all these considerations were lighter than dust, were less than nothing, when set in competition with two words only from Jesus of Nazareth. Impressed, deeply impressed by his powerful summons, such loss they counted gain, and such obloquy glory.

He planted bowels of compassion in the unfeeling avaricious wretch; and elevated, beyond the height of the stars, desires that lay grovelling even below the mire of the swine. The slaves of sin he restored to the liberty of righteousness; and unhappy creatures, who were degenerated into the likeness of the devil, he renewed after the image of the blessed God.—These were the effects of his personal preaching; these are still the conquests of his glorious gospel; and do not these declare his dominion over the intellectual economy? that the world of minds, as well as of material nature, is open to his inspection, and subject to his control?

The dead seem to be more remote from human cognisance, than the secrets of the breast; less liable to any human jurisdiction, than the warring elements. What potentate can issue a writ of release to the grave; or cite the dislodged soul, to re-enter the breathless corpse?—Yet this, even this, our mighty Mediator executed. He opened the eyes, which were

clean;" he is cleansed: to the paralytic, "Arise, take up thy bed, and walk;" 'tis all performed, as soon as commanded.—Surely then we must confess, this is "the voice of a God, not of a man!" *Γεννηθης* is our Lord's usual word, when he grants a miraculous cure: which exactly corresponds with that admired and magnificent expression *Gen. i. 3.*

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sunk in their sockets, and sealed in the tomb. He bid the heart, that had forgot its vital motion, spring into renewed and vigorous life. The crimson flood, long congealed by the icy hand of death: which had not only lost its pulse by stagnation, but likewise changed its very texture by putrefaction; * circulates, at his order, all florid and mantling with health, through the wandering veins.—The spirit, which had taken its flight into the invisible state, had taken its place in eternal habitations, returns, at our Redeemer's signal, to the tenement of mouldering clay; and by the amazing visit, proclaims his sovereignty over those unknown realms, and their mysterious inhabitants.

As he recalls from, so he admits into, the abodes of future happiness. In the very lowest depths of his humiliation, he disposed of the seats of bliss, and the thrones of glory. His hands, when swollen with wounds, and nailed to the tree, evidently sustained “the keys of hell and of death.” Then, even then, he opened and he shut, either the gates of the grave, or the portals of paradise. What he speaks to the penitent thief, is the language of supreme authority: “To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise.” † ’Tis a royal mandamus, not an humble petition.

Does our Lord's superiority extend to those malignant beings, the devil and his angels?—Even these, in spite of all their formidable strength, ‡ and inextinguishable rage, he makes his footstool. He brake the teeth of those infernal lions; and rescued the helpless prey, on which their bloody jaws were closing. At his command, they abandon their conquests; and relinquish, however indignant, however reluctant, their long accustomed habitations. His

* John xi. 39.

† Luke xxiii. 43.

‡ Milton, describing the power of the apostate angels, says,

—————The least of whom could wield
These elements, and arm him with the force
Of all their regions.

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single command, more forcible than ten thousand thunderbolts, dispossesses a whole legion* of those fierce and haughty spirits; drives them, all terrified, and deprecating severer vengeance, to seek rest in solitary deserts, or to herd with the most sordid brutes.

As the blessed Jesus treads upon the necks of those powers of darkness, he receives the willing services of the angels of light. They that excel in strength,† and are active as flames of fire, even they fulfil his commandments, and hearken unto the voice of his words. They graced the solemnity of his birth; they attended him, after his temptation in the wilderness; they were the first triumphant preachers of his triumphant resurrection; and now he is seated on the right hand of the Majesty in the highest,

—————They stand with wings outspread,
List'ning to catch their Master's least command,
And fly through nature, ere the moment end.

Behold him now doing according to his will, in the armies of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the

* Mark v. 9.

† Would any one see a sketch of the glory and excellency of the angelic nature? Let him see it, in that inimitably fine stroke of the sacred pencil: I saw another angel come down from heaven, having great power, and the earth was lightened with his glory, Rev. xviii. 1. —The last clause is, I think, one of the most masterly touches of descriptive painting, extant in history, poetry, or oratory. Milton gives us a stricture of the same kind, and on the same subject. But the poetic flight, though very sublime, is absolutely inferior to the apocalyptic vision.

—————On he led
His radiant files, dazzling the moon.

In this case, we have a whole brigade of celestial warriors; in the former, only a single angelic being. Those are represented, as irradiating the night, and out-shining the moon: this, as exceeding the brightness of the sun; diffusing additional splendours on the day; and illuminating, not a vast plain, nor a vaster kingdom, but the whole face of the globe.—If such be the lustre of the servant, what images can display the majesty of the Lord? who has thousand thousands of these glorious attendants ministering unto him, and ten thousand times ten thousand standing before him? Dan. vii. 10.

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earth:—swaying the sceptre over the legions of hell, and the powers of nature;—exercising dominion in the hearts of men, in the territories of the grave, and mansions of disembodied spirits. Then let my Theron determine,—under such views of our Saviour's unequalled majesty, and unbounded sovereignty, let him determine,—whether it be safer to rest our infinite and eternal interests on our own righteousness, rather than his.

We have selected some few manifestations of our Redeemer's excellent greatness. Even the evangelical historians give us no larger a proportion of his astonishing deeds, than the first fruits bear to a copious harvest. Yet, were they all particularly enumerated, and circumstantially displayed, they would appear inconsiderable, compared with those far more distinguished trophies of almighty power, which he has decreed, in some future period, to erect.*

He will gather to his sacred fold, the people of his ancient church; though they are dispersed into all lands, and most inveterately prejudiced against the truth of his gospel.—How mighty was his hand, how illustriously outstretched his arm, when he made a

* The dignity of our Lord, considered as the Creator and Preserver of all things, is not mentioned here; because something of this kind is professedly attempted, in the Descant upon the Creation, subjoined to the first volume of Meditations among the Tombs, &c. To which I beg leave to refer my reader; and shall make amends for the present omission, by transcribing a passage from the Night Thoughts; which presents us with a magnificent display of this great truth.

—————Thou, by whom all worlds
Were made, and once redeem'd; whose regal pow'r
On more than adamantin basis fix'd;
O'er more, far more than diadems and thrones,
Inviolably reigns; beneath whose foot,
And by the mandate of whose awful nod,
All regions, revolutions, fortunes, fates,
Of high, and low, of mind and matter, roll
Through the short channels of expiring time,
Or shoreless ocean of eternity.

Night Thoughts, No. IX.

from the magnificence of his works, and the divinity of his person.

path through the surges of the ocean, drove the torrent of Jordan backwards, and fetched rivers of water from the flinty rock! Far more mighty will be its operations, when he shall remove the seemingly insurmountable obstructions to the general restoration of the Jews; shall throw all their religious apprehensions into a new channel; and cause tears of penitential sorrow to start from their stony eyes, confessions of unfeigned faith to issue from their blaspheming lips.—Yet thus it will assuredly be. In the volume of the divine book it is written, “They shall look on him whom they have pierced, and mourn.”* They shall adore the Messiah, the once despised Galilean; and fix all their hopes of final felicity on that very Person, whom their fathers slew and hanged on a tree.

Amazing revolution in the religious world! Yet this, together with the destruction of antichrist, and the illumination of the benighted Gentiles, may pass for small incidents, compared with those stupendous events, which will dignify, and signalize the closing scene of affairs.

Then shall the Lord Jesus be manifested in unspeakable glory; and exert such acts of omnipotence, as will be the terror of hell, the joy of heaven, the wonder of eternity.—Then will he put an end to time, and bid the springs of nature cease to operate. Then shall his tremendous trumpet rend the universal vault, and pierce the dormitories of the dead.—Then shall he “shake the earth out of its place,”† and before his majestic presence the “heavens shall flee away.”‡—

* Zech. xii. 10.

† Job ix. 6.

‡ How grand is the idea, when David prays, “Bow thy heavens, O Lord, and come down: touch the mountains, and they shall smoke.”—Much grander is the image, when he says, “The springs of water were seen, and the foundations of the world were discovered, at thy chiding, O Lord, at the blast of the breath of thy displeasure.”—Transcendently and inimitably grand is this description, though given us by the most plain and artless writer in the world: “I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the heavens

The meritorious excellency of Christ's righteousness illustrated,

Then shall, not "a nation" only, but multitudes, multitudes of nations, "be born in a day;"* yea rather, in an hour, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye.—All that are asleep in the beds of death; even those who, perishing in tempests, are sunk to the bottom of the ocean; or, swallowed up by earthquakes, are buried at the centre of the globe; all shall hear his voice; and hearing, shall awake; and awaking, shall come forth.—Every human body,

and the earth fled away, and there was no place found for them," Rev. xx. 11.

In Virgil's admired representation, Jupiter hurls his thunder, and a mountain falls at the stroke :

—————Ille flagranti
Aut Atho, aut Rhodopen, aut alta Ceraunia telo
Dejicit. Geor. I. 331.

In Homer's more terror-striking piece, Neptune strikes the wide extended earth. The mountains tremble to their centre; the ocean heaves its billows; and cities reel on their foundations :

—————Δύϊαρ ενεργε Ποσειδάων ελιναξε
Γαιάν απειρεσιην, ορειων τ' αιπεινα καρηνα,
Πάνεις δ' εσσειοίνυ ποδες πολυπιδακμ Ιδης
Και λоруφαι, Τρωώνη πολις, και νηις Αχαιων.

Iliad. V. 57.

Here the Son of the eternal God appears only, and all nature is alarmed; nor heaven nor earth can keep their standing; they flee away, like the frightened roe.—How grovelling are the loftiest flights of the Grecian and Roman muse, compared with this magnificence and elevation of the prophetic spirit!

Let us consider the passage a little more attentively, "Volet hæc sub luce videri." Masterly performances, the more closely they are examined, the more highly they charm.—It is not said, a few herds of the forest, a few kings, or armies, or nations; but the whole system of created things.—It is not said, they were thrown into great commotions, but they fled entirely away; not, they started from their foundations, but they fell into dissolution; not they removed to a distant place, but "there was found no place for them:" they ceased to exist, they were no more.—And all this, not at the strict command of the Lord Jesus; not at his awful menace, or before his fiery indignation; but at the bare presence of his majesty, sitting with serene but adorable dignity on his throne.

If this is not the true sublime, in its utmost scope, force, and beauty, I must confess, I never saw it, nor ever expect to see it.

from the magnificence of his works, and the divinity of his person.

though ages have revolved since it gave up the ghost; though worms have devoured the flesh, and dissolution mouldered the bones; though its parts have been grinded by the teeth of beasts, or consumed by the rage of fire; dissipated in viewless winds, or scattered over the boundless globe; lost to our senses, and lost even to our imagination; yet will every human body than be restored; its frame rebuilt, and never be demolished more.

Then shall the unnumbered myriads of departed spirits return from their separate abodes; and, commissioned by him "who is the resurrection and the life," reanimate each his organized system.—Then shall Satan and his accomplices, those execrable and horrid criminals, be dragged from their dungeons of darkness, and receive their doom at the Redeemer's tribunal.—Then will misery and happiness, both consummate, and both everlasting, be awarded by the Saviour's sentence.—Then will he consign over the ungodly world, and the rebellious angels, to the flames of hell, and to agonies of despair. Then will he invest the righteous with the inheritance of heaven, and instate them in the fulness of joy. His word is fate; immutability seals, and eternity executes, whatever he decrees.

And has this Jesus, so glorious, so majestic, so adorable,—has he vouchsafed to take our nature, and become our righteousness? was he made under the law? did he fulfil all its demands? give perfect satisfaction to the penal, and yield perfect obedience to the preceptive? on purpose, that the merits of all might be made over to us?—Astonishing condescension! ineffable grace! What thanks are due to such infinitely rich goodness!—What a remedy is here, for the impotence and guilt of fallen man!—What a sure foundation of hope, and what an abundant source of joy, to every one that believeth!

It is declared by the oracle of God, that "such an High Priest became us," was absolutely necessary for our obnoxious and ruinous condition, "who is holy,

harmless, undefiled; separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens."* It appears, I flatter myself, from the letter already in your hand, that Christ fully answered the former character; and from this epistle I hope it will appear, that he is the very person described in the latter clause.

Estimate now, my dear friend, estimate if you can, the glory and excellency of this sublime Person. Then may you learn how to state the worth of his righteousness, and the degree of affiance suited to his merits. Rather, you will perceive, that his spotless birth, his perfectly obedient life, his exquisitely bitter death, are a satisfaction of unknown dignity: precious, † far beyond all the graces of men, and all the duties of angels; able to save to the uttermost, all that rely on them, and come unto God through them.

Consonant to this, are the sentiments of that penetrating, critical, and profound scholar, Dr. Lightfoot; who, treating of our Saviour's obedience, says,—“Add to all this the dignity of his person, who performed this obedience; that he was God as well as man; and his obedience is infinite, such as in its validity subdued Satan, and in its all-sufficiency satisfied the justice of God.”—After which, our celebrated author makes this important and delightful improvement: “Think, christian, what a stock of obedience and righteousness is here for thee, to answer and satisfy for thy disobedience and unrighteousness, if thou become a child of the covenant. Here is enough for every soul that comes to him, be they ever so many. Like the widow's oil in the book of Kings, there is enough and enough again, as long as any vessel is brought to receive it.” ‡

We need not wonder, that Gentiles, who are ig-

* Heb. vii. 26.

† This is expressed by the sacred historian with an energy which no translation can equal *την τιμην τε τελειων επιμειναν απο υιω Ισραηλ.* Matt. xxvii. 9.

‡ Lightfoot's works, vol. ii. p. 1258.

from the magnificence of his works, and the divinity of his person.

norant of the Redeemer; that Jews, who treat him with contemptuous scorn; that professors of religion, who deny his eternal Godhead; place little, if any confidence in his righteousness. But it is strange, that christians, who know the Saviour; who acknowledge his divinity; and believe him to be exalted above all blessing and praise:—it is exceedingly strange, that they do not rejoice in him; make their boast of him; and say, with a becoming disdain, of every other dependence, “Get ye hence!”*

Such an assemblage of divine perfections, must warrant, must demand, the most undivided, and the most unbounded confidence.—There never was, no, not in all ages, nor in all worlds, any thing greater or richer, more dignified, or exalted, than the obedience of our Lord.—Nay, it is impossible to imagine, what could be so suited to our wants, so proper for our reliance, or so sure to answer, more than answer, all our expectations.

Remember what the apostle affirms, and you will not wonder at my assertion. “In him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.” How comprehensive and exalted is this description! It collects into a point all the rays of majesty and honour. It expresses in a sentence, I say not whatever this pen has written, but whatever of dignity the bible itself contains,—the Godhead, the very nature and essence of the Deity;—the fulness of the Godhead; unerring wisdom, almighty power, and whatever the great Jehovah challenges as his own;—all the fulness; every adorable attribute, in the most ample measure, and in the highest degree, all this dwells, not visits occasionally, but stately, invariably, eternally resides;—dwells in Christ Jesus bodily, with an union inconceivably close and intimate; insomuch that the Godhead inhabiting, and the manhood inhabited, make but one and the same Person.

* Isa. xxx. 22.

The meritorious excellency of Christ's righteousness illustrated,

Therefore, adds the sacred disputant, "Ye are complete in him."* Never was any conclusion more weighty in itself, or founded on more solid principles.—Ye are not only pardoned, but reconciled; and not only reconciled, but justified; nay, ye are,—and what can be said or desired more?—ye are complete. And not barely before men or angels, but before infinite purity and omniscience itself. "Ye are made" (amazing and charming truth!) "the righteousness of God"† in the wonderful Saviour. What a fountain is this, or rather what a sea of fathomless depth, to obliterate all sins, and supply all wants! What a mirror of God's stupendous grace, and ever to be adored loving-kindness!

Here let our meditations fix, and here let all our expectations centre. From this, not from any thing of our own, let us derive our peace, our joy, our supreme complacency.—Into this subject we can never dive too deeply. Of this subject we can never think too magnificently. The righteousness of Christ is the master-pillar, on which our eternal welfare rests. Nay, it is the only support, which preserves us from sinking into endless perdition.

There hangs all human hope; that nail supports
Our falling universe.

This renders his intercession prevalent. He is an advocate, a successful advocate with the Father. Why? Because he is "Jesus Christ the righteous."‡—From hence results his ability to justify. He shall justify many, saith the Lord Jehovah. On what consideration? Because he is my "righteous servant."§—This, and no other, is the meritorious cause of our salvation. "Judah shall be saved;" shall escape damnation, and inherit glory. On what account? On account of "the righteous Branch raised up unto

* Col. ii. 9, 10.

† 2 Cor. v. 21.

‡ John ii. 1.

§ Isa. liii. 11.

from the magnificence of his works, and the divinity of his person.

David.*—Since then our acceptance, justification, and salvation; since our comfort in time, our happiness in eternity, all depend upon the righteousness of Christ; how should we delight in contemplating its faultless, its matchless, its transcendent excellency!—Grand! all-sufficient! in every respect perfect!—Nothing equal to it, on earth, in heaven, throughout the universe! surpassing the enormity of our own guilt; surpassing the reach of our imagination; surpassing all that we can express or conceive; being truly, properly, absolutely divine!

And is this righteousness mine? is this righteousness yours, Theron? is this righteousness free for every sinner? Pleasing, captivating, rapturous thought!—Who can forbear exulting and triumphing, in this boundless, this infinite blessing? On such occasion, methinks, some sallies of enthusiasm, or even some starts of tautology, are the language of sensibility, of propriety, of nature. “Sing, O ye heavens: for the Lord, the Lord himself, hath done it.” Our justifying righteousness is finished; finished by Jehovah, sojourning in human clay. “Shout, ye lower parts of the earth; break forth into singing, ye mountains, O forest, and every one therein. For the Lord hath most marvellously redeemed Jacob, and no less illustriously glorified himself in “the recovery of Israel.”†—O for the tongue of a seraph!—But even this would be defective; such ardour cold, and such energy languid.

I have done; I add no more; I leave it—to some future letter? to some laboured essay? No; but to the hymns of heaven, and the adorations of eternity,

* Jer. xxiii. 5,6. I believe it will be needless to observe, that the salvation, mentioned in this and other passages of like import, is not limited to a temporal deliverance, but extends to a state of spiritual and eternal happiness. The temporal is only a subordinate blessing; a kind of appendage to the other; somewhat like the halo round the globe of the moon, or that faint and secondary range of colours, which frequently attends the glowing rainbow.

† Isa. xlv. 23.

The meritorious excellency of Christ's righteousness illustrated,

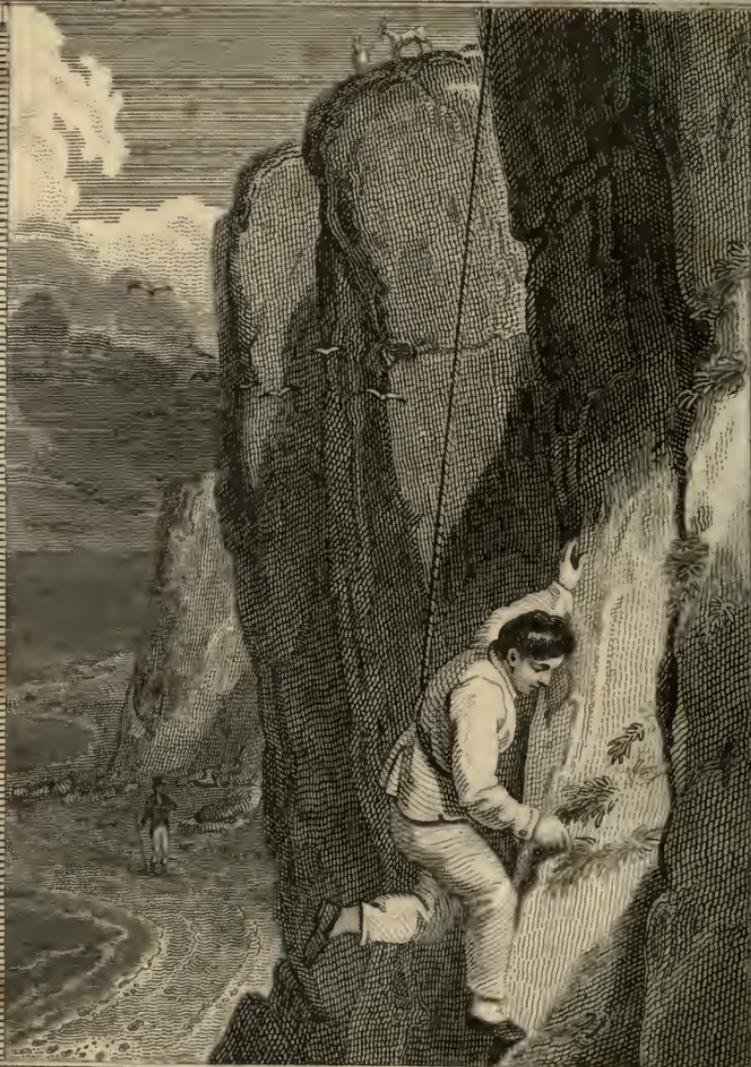
to supply the deficiency of my acknowledgments.—In the mean time, let me entreat my Theron to contemplate our Lord Jesus Christ under that most illustrious character, described by the prophet, “A Priest upon his throne;”* dignifying the sacerdotal censer by the regal diadem; adding all the honours of his eternal divinity, to the sacrifice of his bleeding humanity. Then, I promise myself, you will find it almost impossible not to adopt the emphatical and ardent protestations of the apostle; “God forbid that I should glory,” that I should confide, “save only in the obedience and the cross of Christ Jesus my Lord!”

When you made the tour of France and Italy; and crossing the Alps, gained the summit of some commanding ridge;—when you looked round, with astonishment and delight, on the ample plains, which, crowded with cities, and adorned with palaces, stretch their beauteous tracts below; when you surveyed the famous rivers, that roll in silent but shining dignity; stating the boundaries of kingdoms, and wafting plenty through the gladdened nations; when you shot your transported view to the ocean, whose unmeasurable flood meets the arch of heaven, and terminates the landscape with inconceivable grandeur;—did you then choose to forego the pleasure resulting from such a prospect, in order to gaze upon the naked crag of some adjacent rock? or could you turn your eyes from those magnificent objects, and fasten them with pleased attention upon a shallow puddle, that lay stagnating at your feet?

You, who have beheld the scene, can accommodate the simile with peculiar advantage. For which reason, I shall wave the application; and only beg leave to transcribe a wish, that is now warm on my heart, and is often breathed in supplication from my lips:—May the Father of our spirits, and the Fountain of wisdom, give us an enlightened “under-

* Zech. vi, 13.





CHERON & ASPALTO
Letter the Ninth.

W. M. Gray Del.

T. Dixon Sculp.

from the magnificence of his works, and the divinity of his person.

standing, to know him that is true;" grant us the inestimable blessing, "that we may be in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. For this Saviour is the true God, and" that privilege is "life eternal."*

My Theron needs no argument to convince him, that such a prayer is an act of rational and real friendship; is the most genuine and substantial proof, that I am

His truly affectionate,

ASPASIO.

LETTER IX.

THERON TO ASPASIO.

Dear Aspasio,

YOUR two letters have reached my hand; and I hope they have not missed my heart. I might inform you, what pleasure they gave me, and how highly I esteem them. But you desire no such compliment, you desire to see me impressed with the sentiments, and living under their influence. This would be the most acceptable acknowledgment to my Aspasio, because it would be the most happy effect to his Theron. May every day, therefore, bring a fresh accession of such gratitude to me, and of such satisfaction to you.

To watch for my soul, and pray for my salvation, I am thoroughly convinced, is the truest instance of rational and exalted friendship. Every claim to that amiable character is defective and vain, if it does not

* 1 John v. 20.

extend to our spiritual interests, and our everlasting welfare. For which reason, I need not entreat you to continue and perpetuate this best expression of social kindness. Or if I do, it is rather to testify how much I prize the favour, than to prompt your affectionate and ready mind.

Your last found me at a friend's house, which lies pretty near the western ocean.—Yesterday, waked by the lark, and rising with the dawn,* I strolled into the fragrant air, and dewy fields: while as Shakespear, with his usual sprightliness, expresses himself,

—————Jocund day
Stood tip-toe on the misty mountain's top.

Sweet was the breath of morn, and sweet the exhalations of the freshened flowers;—grateful were the soft salutes of the cooling zephyrs, attended with the charm of earliest birds; delightful the sun, painting with his orient beams the chambers of the firmament, and unveiling the face of universal nature.

My mind, but little affected with these inferior entertainments, was engaged in contemplating an object of infinitely superior dignity; in contemplating that adorable Being, who raised, from nothing raised, this stupendous system of things; and supports, with his word supports, the magnificent frame; who (to speak in the language of his own Spirit) “openeth the eyelids of the morning, and commandeth the day-spring to know its place:”† commandeth the light, by its punctual and pleasing ministrations, to draw aside

* *Evandrum ex humili tecto lux suscitata alma,
Et matutini volucrum sub culmine cantus.* *Virg.*

Lux alma—A lovely expression! describing the mildness, the beauty, and the cheering efficacy of the rising sun. It is, I think, incapable of an equal translation; but reminds me of a very fine comparison in our sacred eclogues, which represents the charming appearance, and the benign influence of the gospel church, at its first opening on the Gentile world,—“Who is this that looketh forth as the morning?” *Cant. vi. 10.*

† *Job xxxviii. 12.*

The western cliffs.

the curtain of darkness, and discover the skies shining with glories, and disclose the earth blooming with beauties.

Father of light and life, said my transported mind,

—————Thou Good Supreme!
 O teach me what is good! teach me thyself.
 Save me from folly, vanity, and vice,
 From ev'ry low pursuit! and feed my soul
 With faith, with conscious peace, and virtue pure,
 Sacred, substantial, never fading bliss.*

Wrapt in wonder, and lost in thought, I rambled carelessly along, till I was insensibly brought to the shore; which, in these parts, is prodigiously high and strong, perfectly well fitted, to stand as an everlasting barrier,† against the impetuous stroke of conflicting winds, and the ponderous sweep of dashing surges.—Not that the omnipotent Engineer has any need of these impregnable ramparts. Here, it is true, they intervene; and not only repress the rolling invader, but speak the amazing majesty of their Maker. In other places, all such laboured methods of fortification are laid aside. The Creator shews the astonished world, that he is confined to no expedients; but orders all things, “according to the pleasure of his own will.” He bids a low bank of despicable sand, receive and repel the most furious shocks of assaulting seas: and “though the waves thereof toss themselves” with incredible fierceness, yet can they not prevail; though “they roar,” and seem to menace universal destruction, yet “can they not pass over”‡ this slightest of mounds.

* Thomson's Winter.

† These, doubtless, are “the doors and the bars,” which the Almighty mentions in the course of his awful interrogatories to Job: the massy doors, which can never be forced; the solid bars, which can never be broke; and I may add, the conspicuous columns on which his Providence has inscribed that sovereign mandate, “Ne plus ultra.” Or, as the prohibition runs in his own majestic words, “Hitherto shalt thou go, but no farther.” Job xxxviii. 10.

‡ Jer. v. 22.

The wonders of the ocean.

A winding passage broke the declivity of the descent; and led me, by a gradual slope, to the bottom.—The moon being in her last quarter, and the tide at its greatest recess, I walked for a while, where briny waves were wont to flow.—The ebbing waters had left a vacant space, several furlongs broad; equal in length to a very extended vista; smooth on its surface, as the most level bowling-green; and almost as firm, as the best compacted causeway. Insomuch, that the tread of a horse scarce impresses it, and the waters of the sea never penetrate it. Exclusive of this wise contrivance, the searching waves would insinuate themselves into the heart of the earth; the earth itself would be hollow as a honeycomb, or bibulous as a sponge; and the sea, soaking by degrees through all its cavities, would, in the process of time, forsake its bed, and mingle with the plains and mountains. But this closely cemented or glutinous kind of pavement, is like claying the bottom of the universal canal. So that the returning tides consolidate, rather than perforate its substance, and prevent the sun from cleaving it with chinks.—Such, I hope, will be the case with this soul of mine, and the temptations that beset me. Beset they do, they will. But may they never win upon my affections, nor gain admittance into my heart! Let them make me humble, and keep me vigilant; teach me to walk closely with my God, and urge me to an incessant dependence on Christ. Then, instead of being ruinous, they may become advantageous; and instead of shattering, will only cleanse the rock on which they dash.

The mighty waters, restless even in their utmost tranquillity, with a solemn but placid murmur,* struck my ear. The billows, sometimes advancing to kiss

* This is described with inimitable propriety by Homer:

Βη δ' ακων παρα θινε πιλυφλοισβοιο θαλασσης.

And only not quite so beautifully by Milton:

He said; and as the sound of waters deep,
Hoarse murmur echo'd to his words applause.

the sand, sometimes drawing back their curly heads into the deep, whitened, at their extremities, into an agreeable foam: which, with the reflective representation of the azure canopy, formed the appearance of a most spacious floating mantle, tinged with a beautiful blue, and edged with fringes of silver.—Dignity and elegance, I find, are the inseparable characteristics of the Creator's workmanship. As comfort and happiness, I sometimes perceive, are the very spirit of his gospel, and the genuine produce of his commands.

On one side, the Atlantic main rolled its surges from world to world.—Immense, immense diffusion of waters! What a spectacle of magnificence and terror! What an irresistible incitement to reverence and awe! How it fills the mind, and amazes the imagination! 'Tis the grandest and most august object under the whole heavens. It reminds me of that apocalyptic vision, which John, the enraptured seer, beheld! "As it were a great mountain burning with fire, was cast into the sea, and the third part of the sea became blood; and the third part of the creatures which were in the sea, and had life, died; and the third part of the ships were destroyed."* I have not penetration enough to discover the spiritual meaning of this passage; but I discern a most dreadful grandeur in its plain and literal sense.—If we consider the wonderful compass, and the terrible force of such an enormous mass of fire; if we consider its horrible and destructive effects, on such a vast body of waters, as the third part of the ocean; how tremendous and astonishing is the idea! Surely, nothing but divine inspiration could suggest these images; as none but an almighty Being can execute this vengeance. Who would not fear an eternal King, that has such weapons, and such artillery, "reserved against the day of battle and war?"†

Spacious as the sea is, God has provided a garment

* Rev. viii. 8, 9.

† Job xxxviii. 23.

to cover it. Profound as the sea is, God has prepared swaddling bands to enwrap it. Ungovernable as it may seem to us, he over-rules it with as much ease, as the nurse manages a new-born "infant."* An infant it is before almighty power; and to an infant it is compared by Jehovah himself; though to our apprehension, it raves like a stupendous madman.—But if he command, it opens a peaceful bosom, and receives his people. It smooths the way for their passage, and stands as a bulwark for their defence. They march "through the midst of the sea upon dry ground, and the waters are a wall unto them on their right hand, and on their left."† If he reverses his mandate, they drive down, with an irresistible sweep, upon the hosts of Pharaoh, and overwhelm the chariots and horses of Egypt. They pour confusion upon arrogance,‡ and disappoint the designs of persecution and cruelty.—If he says, Be still; the bellowing surges are hushed, and the gentlest lamb is not so quiet. If he says, Destroy; even the quiescent waters kindle into rage; they rise in their Maker's cause; and ten thousand lions stung with hunger, and rushing upon their prey, are not so fierce. When he bids them execute any other commission, the horse broke to the bit, the spaniel disciplined to the signal, are not half so dutiful and ob-

* Job xxxviii. 8, 9.

† Exod. xiv. 22.

‡ Arrogance.—This is described with exquisite delicacy, in the *Επιτυχίον* or triumphant song of Moses. "The enemy said, I will pursue; I will overtake; I will divide the spoil; my lust shall be satisfied upon them: I will draw my sword, my hand shall destroy them." What swelling words of vanity are here? The very spirit of a Thraso breathes in every syllable of the beautiful *prosopopœia*. Never was the language of bluster, ferocity, and rhodomontade, so finely mimicked. How noble is the turn, and how exalted the sentiment, which follows! "Thou didst blow with thy wind; the sea covered them; they sunk as lead in the mighty waters." The God of Israel need not summon all his power, or level the aiming thunderbolts; he only blows with his wind, and the great mountain breaks like a bubble. All this insolent and formidable parade is quashed; sinks into nothing; expires in shame and ruin. Exod. xv. 9, 10.

sequious.—And shall our passions be more wild than the winds, more turbulent than the billows? Forbid it, Almighty Lord! thou that “rulest the raging of the sea, and the noise of its waves, restrain, subdue, and calm the madness of the people.”

The eye travels hard. It travels over a vast, vast length of fluctuating plains.* It reaches the limits of the hemisphere, where skies and waves seem to mingle. Yet it has scarce made an entry upon the world of waters. What I here discern, is no more than the skirts of the great and wide sea. Tracts incomparably broader, are still behind; and tracts of unbounded extent are behind even those.—Great then, O my soul, inconceivably great, is that adored and glorious Sovereign, who sitteth upon this flood, as upon a throne;† nay, who holds it, diffused as it is from pole to pole, in the hollow of his hand; and before whom, in all its prodigious dimensions, it is but as the drop of a bucket.—How shall reptiles of the earth sink low enough in their own apprehensions? What humiliation can be sufficiently deep for sinful mortals, before this “high and holy One!” Yet how may they rise on the wings of hope! how may they soar on the pinions of faith! when, in the language of his prophet, and in his own Son’s name, they thus address the everlasting God. “Awake! awake! put on strength, O arm of the Lord! awake, for our succour and security, as in the ancient days, in the generations of old. Art thou not it, that hath cut Rahab, and wounded the dragon? Art thou not it, which hath dried the sea, the waters of the great deep? that hath made the depth of the sea, a way for the ransomed to pass over?”‡

How grand, surprisingly grand and majestic, are the works, as well as the attributes, of an omnipotent Being! What are all the canals in all the countries of

* —Camposque natantes.

Lucret.

† Psa. xxix. 10.

‡ Isa. li. 9, 10.

the earth, compared with this immense reservoir? What are all the superb edifices, erected by royal munificence, compared with yonder concave of the skies? And what are the most pompous illuminations of the theatres and triumphant cities, compared with the resplendent source of day! They are a spark, an atom, a drop.—Nay, in every spark, and atom, and drop, which proceeds from the hand of the Almighty, there is the manifestation of a wisdom and a power absolutely incomprehensible.

Let us examine a single drop of water, the very least quantity that the eye can discern; only so much, as will just adhere to the point of a needle. In this almost imperceptible speck, a famous philosopher computes no less than thirteen thousand globules. Amazing to conceive! impossible to explicate!—If then in so small a speck abundantly more than ten thousand globules exist, what myriads of myriads must float in the unmeasured extent of the ocean;—Let the ablest arithmetician try to comprehend in his mind, not the internal constitution, but only the number of these fluid particles. As well may he grasp the winds in his fist, or mete out the universe with his span, as execute the task.—If then we are utterly unable to number (which is the most superficial of all researches) even the most common works of the great Jehovah; how can we pretend to lay open the secrets and penetrate the recesses of his infinite mind! How can we pretend to investigate the whole process, and solve all the difficulties, of that highest and deepest of the divine schemes, Redemption!

I have sometimes been offended, I must confess, when you have enlarged upon the mysterious truths of christianity. But I perceive, the beam was in my own eye, when I fancied the mote was in my friend's. Is there, in every ray of light, and in every particle of matter, a depth of contrivance unfathomable by the line of any human understanding? And shall there be nothing abstruse or profound, nothing but what is

The wonders of the ocean.

level to our scanty apprehensions, in the great* things of God's law, and the glorious† things of his gospel? To expect this, is just as wise in itself, and just as congruous to nature, as to expect—a sea, whose cavities might have been digged by our spade; a sky, whose arches are measurable by our compass; a sun, whose orb may be included in our lanterns.

When therefore I read of One uncreated and eternal Being, subsisting in Three divine Persons; when I hear of an infinitely pure and perfect God, made flesh for the redemption of sinful men; when I meditate on the righteous and universal Judge, reconciling the world unto himself, by the death of his own Son;—when a thousand curious and inquisitive thoughts are ready to rise on the occasion: I will bid them first sound the depths of a single drop, and then apply their plummet to the boundless ocean. This, I am very sure, is not weak credulity, nor wild enthusiasm; but the maturest dictate of reason, and the very precision of truth.—Let then the great Creator make that sublime declaration; “As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways than your ways; and my thoughts than your thoughts.”‡ Let every human creature add that humble acknowledgment: “O the depths of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!”§ and not devotion only, but reason and truth, will say Amen to both.

You see, Aspasio, how I am trying to adopt your spirit. You will observe the willing scholar, though not the great proficient.—But stay! is this right? to divert from such commanding subjects, and take notice of mere punctilios?—My friend may spare his frowns. I am surprised and angry at myself. Away with the little arts of self-recommendation. Self

* רבו תורתִי Hos. viii. 12.

† Τα μεγαλεια τα Θεου, Acts ii. 11.

‡ Isa. iv. 9.

§ Rom. xi. 33.

A devout aspiration.

should be forgot, should be swallowed up, and lost in devout astonishment, when we are viewing the magnificence, and meditating on the wonders of creation.

Behind me, and far off to the north, Cambria's dusky coasts just, and but just, emerged. Lost were all her woods and mountains. Instead of ornamented towns, and cultivated plains, a confused mist, or a low-hung cloud, seemed to hover on the ocean's remotest brim!—Behind me! Remembrance is roused at the expression, and conscience sharpens her sting. Ah! how often and how long, have I treated in this very manner, the noblest scenes, and the sublimest joys! have turned my back—ungrateful and besotted creature!—upon the heavenly country, and wandered from the regions of infinite delight! Therefore now they appear dim. I have scarcely a glimpse of their transcendent excellences. Or if I see them by faith, it is with frequent intermissions, and much obscurity.—Turn me, O thou God of my salvation, turn me from pursuing phantoms, and attach me to thy blessed self. Let me henceforth steer an invariable course to Emmanuel's kingdom. May its treasures, as I advance, open to my view, and its glories brighten in my eye. O! may some odours, better, far better, than Sabæan spicy odours,* exhale from the delectable hills, and the celestial shores!—But chiefly, thou eternal Spirit, breathe upon my soul, both by thy convincing and comforting influences! nor ever cease to swell my sails, and speed my progress, till I arrive at “the land, that is very far off; and see the

* Alluding to those lines in Milton,

—————As when to them who sail
Beyond the Cape of Hope, and now are past
Mosambic, off at sea north-east winds blow
Sabæan odour, from the spicy shore
Of Araby the bless'd, and many a league
Cheer'd with the grateful smell old ocean smiles.

King, the King of grace and of glory, in all his ineffable beauty."*

On my left hand, a range of mountainous cliffs rose in a perpendicular direction. The huge pile extended, as far as the sight could discern, its black boundaries. Here bending inwards to the land; there bellying out into the deep: every where projecting a shade, several leagues across the ocean.

The height of these cliffs is so prodigious, that every human creature who comes near the summit, starts back terrified and aghast. Only a few straggling goats venture to graze on the top: and these, to a person walking below, appear but as specks of moving white. While the sea mews, that winnow the air about the middle steep, look like winged animalcules, pursuing their little sports in a different region.—The aspect of these cliffs so wild and horrid, it is impossible to behold them without a shivering dread. The spectator is apt to imagine, that nature formerly suffered some violent convulsions, or hath been shattered by the flaming bolts, and that those are the dismembered remains of the dreadful stroke; the ruins, not of Persepolis or Palmyra, but of the world.

Amazing! What adventurous daring creature is yonder, gathering samphire from the cavities of the rocks! He has let himself down several fathoms beneath the black and dizzy summit.—He gleans a poor livelihood, from the edges of danger, shall I say? rather, from the jaws of death. I cannot discern the rope to which he clings. He seems to be suspended over the tremendous precipice, by a thread, by a hair, by nothing.—I'll look no longer. The very sight chills my veins. While I view his perilous elevation, I can think of nothing but a headlong downfall, and fractured bones; of brains left to reek on the pointed crags, and blood streaming on the discoloured beach.

Suppose (if the mind can bear so shocking a sup-

* Isa. xxxiii. 17.

The western cliffs.

position) some poor wretch, exposed on the brow of this stupendous promontory; without any support of his feet; and cleaving only to a weak slender shrub, which but just adheres to the interstices of the rock. What tumultuous throbbings seize his breast! what a dying paleness invades his cheeks! and what agonies of fear rend his heart! as he hangs, projecting over the ragged precipice; and surveys the ocean deep, wondrous deep below!—The bough gives way. His only hope fails. It yields more and more to his weight. Good heavens! he sinks! he sinks! O for some friendly hand, to snatch him from perishing! Millions, millions of gold, were the cheap purchase of such a mercy.—There was a time, my soul, when thou wast in a situation, (equally, shall I say?) infinitely more dangerous; tottering, not only on the verge of life, but on the very brink of hell. Remember that compassionate arm, which was stretched out, in the very article of need, to rescue thee from imminent and everlasting perdition. Never forget that gracious voice, which said,—in accents sweeter than the music of the seraphic choir,—“ Deliver him from going down to the pit. Let his health be restored, and his day of grace prolonged.”

In some places, the hideous ruins not only tower to the skies, but lean over the strand. Prominent and frightfully pendulous, they nod horror and threaten destruction on all below. A person congratulates himself, when he has got clear of the bending precipice; and can hardly forbear thinking, that the enormous load is withheld by some unseen hand, till the execrable wretch, doomed to a most astonishing vengeance, is come within the reach of the blow. And truly, if he had the strength of the elephant, or the firmness of the behemoth, this must grind him to powder, or even crush him into atoms.

How awful to consider, that there is a day coming when wicked potentates, and haughty monarchs, will beg of yonder seas, to yawn compassionately deep, and hide them in their darkest abysses; hide them

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from the piercing eye, and avenging sword, of inflexible justice. That there is a day coming, when the soft voluptuary, the wanton beauty, and all the ungodly of the earth, will beseech those tremendous ridges, with all their unsupportable burden of craggy rocks, to rush down upon their guilty heads;* if, by this means, they may be screened from the infinitely more dreaded weight of divine indignation.

Vain are their cries; and vainer still would be their refuge, should their passionate request be granted. Can floods conceal the impious wretches, when the caverns of the ocean shall be laid bare, and the foundations of the world be discovered? Can rocks secrete an obnoxious rebel, when rocks, with all their marble quarries, and adamantine entrails, shall dissolve like melting wax? when hills that plunge their roots to the centre, and lose their towering heads in air, shall start from their affrighted base,† and flee away like a withered leaf!—Good God! what racking

* Rev. iv. 15, 16.

† This brings to our remembrance a most sublime description of the divine Power, which arises in a beautiful climax, and terminates in this grand idea. The voice of the Lord is mighty in operation; the voice of the Lord is a glorious voice. The voice of the Lord breaketh the cedars; yea, the Lord breaketh the cedars of Lebanon. He maketh them also to skip like a calf; Lebanon and Sirion like a young unicorn. Psa. xxix. 4, 5, 6.

The voice of the Lord is mighty in operation. This is the general proposition; which, in the following sentences, we see most magnificently illustrated.—The voice of the Lord breaketh the cedars; when he speaks in thunder, and bids the lightning execute his orders, the trees, the cedar trees, those sturdiest productions of the earth, are shivered to pieces.—Yea, the Lord breaketh the cedars of Lebanon; which, for stateliness and strength, surpass the oaks of the forest; surpass every tree of the field, almost as much as the oak exceeds a shrub.—It is a small thing with Jehovah, to rend the trunks, to tear up the roots, and make those massy bodies “skip like a calf;” even Lebanon and Sirion, the mountains on which they grow, tremble before their God. They are thrown into strange commotions; they are ready to spring from their foundations; and, with all their load of woods and rocks, appear like some affrighted or some sportive animal, that starts with horror, or leaps with exultation.

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anguish must they feel!* what inexpressibly severer torment must they fear! who can implore, ardently implore as a most desirable favour, what imagination itself shudders to conceive.

In some places, these mountainous declivities lift their brow aloft; plant their bases deep; and, instead of portending a fall, defy the fury of the most impetuous elements. Firmly consolidated, and stedfastly established, they have withstood the united, the repeated assaults of winds and waves, through a long series of revolving ages.—The sacred writers, I observe, select almost all the striking images which the whole creation affords; in order to communicate their heavenly ideas, with the greatest advantage. Isaiah, describing the security of the righteous, takes his comparison from the grand spectacle before my eyes: “He shall dwell on high: his place of defence shall be the munition of rocks;”† inaccessible as those lofty ridges, immoveable as their everlasting foundations.

Should it be asked, what these munition of rocks may signify? I find two places of refuge and safeguard pointed out in the scripture; to either of which, I believe, the metaphor is applicable. “He had horns,” says one of the divine Pindarics, “coming

* Good God! This exclamation is introduced on a very serious occasion, and used with an apparent air of reverence. Under which circumstances, perhaps, it may be sometimes allowable, and not dishonourable to the divine Majesty. But when it is admitted into ordinary conversation, on trifling occurrences, and with a levity of temper; it is itself a very great offence, and discovers a very irreligious spirit.—It is so great an offence, that the God of heaven and earth declares himself the avenger on such transgressors. “He will not hold them guiltless,” or he will assuredly punish them. And if God condemn, who shall acquit? If he will punish, who can deliver from his hand?—It discovers a very irreligious spirit; is a most dangerous symptom; somewhat like a plague spot on the conversation. It shews, that there is no saving health, no life of God in the soul. Was there any sensibility in the conscience, and grace in the heart, it would be impossible to treat so wantonly that glorious and fearful name, “The Lord thy God,” Deut. xxviii. 58.

† Isa. xxxiii. 16.

out of his hand; there was the hiding of his power.* Uncontrollable and omnipotent power was lodged in the great Jehovah's hand; and this was the sure defence, this the impregnable garrison, for all his people.—The church of Christ is said to be “in the clefts of the rock:”† that spiritual rock, of which the Israelites drank in the wilderness; whose sacred clefts were opened, when the bloody spear tore up the Redeemer's side, and cut a wide and deadly passage to his heart. Surely, the inhabitants of this Rock have reason to sing.‡ What should disquiet them? Who can destroy them? Why should not the voice of joy be in their dwellings, and that hymn of holy

* Hab. iii. 4. Horns are an emblem of strength. “A horn of salvation” is put for a mighty and effectual salvation, Luke ii. 62. “Thou hast heard me from among the horns of the unicorn;” thou hast rescued me from the most potent and formidable enemies, Psa. xxii. 21. Here the word denotes that power of Jehovah, to which nothing is impossible; and more than seems, if we consult the next clause.—“There was the hiding of his power;” or, as it may be rendered, his powerful hiding, a most secure refuge, a sanctuary absolutely inviolable.—I have accommodated this passage to a different sense, *Meditations*, vol. I. But the true signification, most suitable to the context, and most subservient to the prophet's design, is, I apprehend, given by Theron. It is somewhat like an exalted sentiment in the *Night Thoughts*; which, with a small alteration, may serve as a paraphrase on the text,

And nature's shield the hollow of his hand.

A christian's shield the hollow of his hand.

† Cant. ii. 14. Should the reader have an occasion to see this sacred, but mysterious book explained, I would refer him to Dr. Gill's *Exposition of the Canticles*, which has such a copious vein of sanctified invention running through it, and is interspersed with such a variety of delicate and brilliant images, as cannot but highly entertain a curious mind; which presents us also with such rich and charming displays of the glory of Christ's person, the freeness of his grace to sinners, and the tenderness of his love to the church, as cannot but administer the most exquisite delight to the believing soul.—Considered in both these views, I think, the work resembles the paradisaical garden, described by Milton; in which

Blossoms and fruits at once of golden hue
Appear'd, with gay enamell'd colours mix'd.

‡ Isa. xiii. 11.

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triumph in their mouths? "We have a strong city. Salvation hath God appointed," salvation itself, "for walls and bulwarks."*—Happy should I think myself, if I was interested in this Saviour, and established on this Rock.

Yonder, on the summit of the most conspicuous cliff, is erected a grand and stately pile. At the top, my glass discovers a superb lantern; at the foot, are the huts of fishermen, surrounded with various sorts of nets.—It is, I suppose, a light-house, intended to apprise the sailor of devouring gulphs, and destructive shoals; or else to conduct him into a safe road, and secure harbour.

Both the situation and design of the building read me a lesson; the one of awful admonition, the other of comfortable instruction.—Comfortable instruction. How massy and ponderous is this edifice! yet there is not the least reason to be apprehensive of a failure in the foundation. Was the structure ten thousand times larger, the solid rock would support it, with the utmost ease, and the utmost steadiness. Such is Christ, such are his merits, such his glorious righteousness, to those wise and blessed souls, who rest all the weight of their everlasting interests on him alone. Such, did I say? Much surer. For "mountains may depart, and the hills may be removed;"† but this divine basis can never sink, can never be shaken.—Awful admonition. For it recalls to my memory that alarming yet welcome text,‡ which you styled the spiritual light-house; which has been as serviceable to my distressed mind and bewildered thoughts, as such an illuminated watch-tower to the wandering and benighted mariner. May I often view it; ever attend to its faithful direction; and be led, by its influences, into the haven, the desired haven of peace and salvation.

Let me once again survey those vast but noble de-

* Isa. xxvi. 1.

† Isa. liv. 10.

‡ See Rom. ix. 30, 31, 32; and above, Letter V.

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formities, those rude but majestic elevations of stone. —Fortifications, reared by an almighty hand, to protect us at once from warring elements and invading enemies.—Ramparts, which overlook and command the ocean; which, viewed by distant mariners, seem to touch and prop the sky; which have surrounded our isle ever since the universal deluge, and will be her never-failing defence even to the general conflagration.—If some opinionated engineer should take it into his head, to suspect the stability of those unshaken and everlasting bulwarks; if he should make proposals for strengthening them with buttresses, or girding them round with cramping irons! how would his project be received? with approbation and applause, or with contempt and indignation? “Fool that he is! to think of enlarging, corroborating, or improving the finished and magnificent works of nature, by the puny piddlings of art!”—Such, so foolish and preposterous, was my once favourite conceit, of adding my own performances, in order to increase the justifying efficacy of Christ’s obedience. What a disparagement was this to the great, the divine foundation! which, for the support and security of burdened and endangered sinners, is sufficient,—is self-sufficient,—is all-sufficient.

How changeable is the face of this liquid element! Not long ago, there was nothing, from this stony boundary, to the horizon’s utmost verge, but the wildest tumult and most horrible confusion. Now the stormy flood has smoothed its rugged brow, and the watery uproar is lulled into a profound tranquillity. Where rolling mountains rushed and raged, threatening to dash the clouds, and deluge the earth; there the gentle undulations play, and only just wrinkle the surface of the mighty bason. Where the dreadful abyss opened its wide and unfathomable jaws, to swallow up the trembling sailor, and his shattered vessel; there a calm and clear expanse diffuses its ample bosom, alluring the fish to bask in the sun, and inviting the sea-fowl to watch for their prey.

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In this fair floating mirror, I see the picture of every cloud, which passes through the regions of the sky. But in its uncertain and treacherous temperature, I see more plainly the inconstant and ever-variable condition of human affairs.—I durst not be surety to the mariner, for peaceful seas and soothing gales. I could not ascertain the continuance of this halcyon weather, so much as a single day, or even to the next hour. And let me not fondly promise myself an uninterrupted tenor of serenity in my mind, or of prosperity in my circumstances.—Sometimes, indeed, my heart exults under the smile of heaven, and the favour of God. But soon, ah! too soon I am clouded with fear, and oppressed with corruption. I sigh out that passionate acknowledgment, “Wretched man that I am!” and add that wishful inquiry, “Who shall deliver me?”—For this disordered state of things, the afflicted patriarch’s complaint, is the most apposite motto, and most wholesome memento: “Changes and war are around me.”*—But there is a world, where disastrous revolutions will be known no more; where our enjoyments will no longer fluctuate like the ocean, but be more stedfast than the rocks, and more immoveable than the shores.

Here I see an immense collection of waters, in a state of deep repose. Could I extend my view to some remoter tracts, I should behold every thing smoother and calmer still. Not a furrow sinks, nor ridge swells the surface of the ocean. ’Tis all like a glassy plain. The waves are asleep. Echo is hushed. Not a gale stirs. The sea stagnates, the mariner is becalmed; and the vessel scarcely creeps.—Whereas, could I survey the Straits of Magellan, or the Gut of Gibraltar, I should find a very striking difference. There the waters press in with vehemence, and rush forward with impetuosity. All is there in strong agitation, and rapid progress. The ship is whirled through the narrow passage; and rides, as it were, on

* Job x. 17.

and its various inhabitants.

the wheels of the surge, or on the wings of the wind.—This my dear Aspasio, is a true image of what I have been, and of what I am. Some months ago, when I was insensible of guilt, all my prayers were listless, and all my religion was spiritual lethargy. I felt not in my heart, what I uttered with my tongue. Hosannas were but an empty ceremony, and confessions froze on my formal lips.—But, since the Spirit of God has awakened me from my dream, and convinced me of my sinfulness, I can no longer be satisfied with indolent and yawning devotions. Trials and temptations put strong cries into my mouth. My soul mourns before the Lord; my desires plead with the blessed God; and I am ready to say, as the patriarch of old, I cannot, I must not, “I will not let thee go, unless thou bless me.”*

I see no flocks of sheep, with sober assiduity, nibbling the grassy plains. No sportive lambs, with innocent gaiety, frisking along the sunny banks. Here are no stables for the generous steed, nor pastures for the lusty heifer. Nevertheless, these watery regions are stocked with colonies of proper and peculiar inhabitants:—who are clothed and accoutred in exact conformity to the clime: not in swelling wool or buoyant feathers; not in a flowing robe, or full-trimmed suit; but with as much compactness, and with as little superfluity, as possible. They are clad, or rather sheathed in scales; which adhere closely to their bodies, and are always laid in a kind of natural oil. Than which apparel nothing can be more light, and at the same time nothing more solid. It hinders the fluid from penetrating their flesh; it prevents the cold from coagulating their blood; and enables them to make their way through the waters, with the utmost facility.—They have each a curious instrument,† by which they increase or diminish their specific gravity; sink like lead, or float like a cork; rise to what height, or descend to what depth, they please.

* Gen. xxxii. 26.

† The air-bladder.

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This is the abode of the leviathan, hugest of living creatures. Before whom the broad-limbed elephant, and the tall-necked camel, are mere shrimps. A stretched out promontory, when he sleeps; a moving island, when he swims; "making the sea to boil like a pot," when unweildily wallowing, he takes his prodigious pastime.—Here the voracious shark, that tyrant of the fluid kingdoms, and assassin of the finny nations, roams and commits his ravages; embrues his horrid fangs, and marks his rapid path, with blood.—Here dwelt the great, and greatly surprising fish, whose fierceness and avidity the Almighty Sovereign employed as his pursuivant, to arrest a fugitive prophet; whose ample jaws, or capacious entrails, were the dungeon to confine a rebellious subject, and the cabin to lodge a penitent offender; whose bulk, and strength, and speed, were a kind of vessel, transporting this convict to "the bottom of the mountains, and the bars of the earth."* After the criminal was sufficiently chastised, and properly humbled, he served as a galley with oars, to convey him safe to land.

In the same element resides (at least takes up part of his residence) that formidable monster, who is made without fear, and "has not his like upon earth." He esteemeth the pointed iron as straw, and ponderous brass as rotten wood. His heart is as hard as a piece of the nether milstone, and his scales are a coat of impenetrable mail. Strength not to be resisted, much less to be subdued, lies entrenched in his sinewy neck. His eyes are like the eyelids of the opening day; and when he rolls those glaring orbs, there seems to be another morn risen on midnight. His teeth are terrible, jagged for rapine, and edged with death. His throat is as a burning furnace; clouds of smoke are poured from his nostrils, and flakes of fire issue from his mouth. None, no not the most resolute, dares provoke him to the combat, or even stir him up

* Jonah ii. 6.

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from his slumbers. He laugheth at the shaking of the spear, and "sorrow marcheth in triumph before him."* Whenever he raiseth himself, the mighty are afraid; wherever he advanceth, ruin is there.—If a mere creature is capable of spreading such alarm and dread, how greatly is the Creator himself to be feared? who can turn the most harmless inhabitant of the ocean into a ravenous alligator, or a horrid crocodile! who can arm every reptile of the ground with all the force and rage of a lion!

'Tis impossible to enter on the muster-roll, those scaly herds, and that minuter fry, which graze the sea-weed, or stray through the coral groves. They are innumerable, as the sands which lie under them; countless as the waves which cover them. Here are uncouth animals, of monstrous shapes,† and amazing

* Job xii. 14. לִפְנֵי תְרוּעַת דָּאֵבָה "Mœror," says Bochart, "præcedit tranquam metator et comes, tumidique antea mbulo regis." Terror and anguish are a kind of advanced guard to the monarch among the reptiles: or, they go before the monster, as the man bearing a shield went before the Philistine giant.—The original word occurs in no other part of the divine book. I cannot recollect any expression, which so fully represents its meaning, as Homer's *κοδιωρ*, or Xenophon's *γαυρῖασθαι*; both which are intended to describe the ardour and action of a high-mettled prancing steed. The whole paragraph is a sketch of the crocodile's picture. It exhibits a few circumstances, collected from that inimitable description, extant in the book of Job: which are given, either in the sacred writer's own words, or else in a paraphrastic explanation of their sense.

† Monstrous shapes.—Such as the sword-fish; whose upper jaw is lengthened into a strong and sharp sword: with which he sometimes ventures to attack the ships, though armed with thunder; and is capable of piercing their sides, though ribbed with oak. This may be called the champion of the waters; who, though never exceeding sixteen feet in length, yet, confiding in a weapon at once so trusty and so tremendous, scruples not to give battle even to the whale himself.—The sun-fish has no tail, seems to be all head; and was it not for two fins, which act the part of oars, would be one entire round mass of flesh. The polypus, remarkable for its numerous feet, and as many claws; by which it has the appearance of a mere insect, and seems only fitted to crawl. At the same time, an excrescence, arising on the back, enables it to steer and pursue a steady course in the waves. So that it may pass under the two-fold character of a

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qualities.* Some that have been discovered by the inquisitive eye of men; and many more, that remain among the secrets of the hoary deep.—Here are shoals and shoals, of various characters, and of the most diversified sizes; from the cumbrous whale, whose flouncings tempest the ocean, to the evanescent anchovy, whose substance dissolves in the smallest fricassee.—Some, lodged in their pearly shells, and fattening on their rocky beds, seem attentive to no higher employ, than that of imbibing moist nutriment. These, but a small remove from vegetable life, are almost rooted to the rocks, on which they lie reposed. While others, active as the winged creation, and swift as an arrow from an Indian bow, shoot along the yielding flood, and range at large the spacious regions of the deep.

Here is the tortoise, who never moves but under her own portable pent-house. The lobster, which, whe-

sailor and a reptile.—Horace intimates, that the British ocean is famous for producing sea-monsters :

Te belluosus qui remotis
Obstrepsit oceanus Britannis.

* Amazing qualities.—Among these may be reckoned the torpedo, which benumbs on a sudden, and renders impotent whatever fish it assaults; and, which is a more extraordinary property, strikes even the fisherman's arm, when he offers to lay hold on it, with a temporary deadness. By which means, it possesses the double advantage, of arresting its prey, and of securing itself.—The cuttle-fish, furnished with a liquid magazine, of a colour and consistence like ink; which, when pursued by an enemy, the creature emits, and blackens the water. By this artifice, the foe is bewildered in the chace; and while the one vainly gropes in the dark, the other seizes the opportunity, and makes his escape.—The nautilus, whose shell forms a natural boat. The dextrous inhabitant unfurls a membrane to the wind, which serves him instead of a sail. He extends also a couple of arms, with which, as with two slender oars, he rows himself along. When he is disposed to dive, he strikes sail, and, without any apprehension of being drowned, sinks to the bottom. When the weather is calm, and he has an inclination to see the world, or take his pleasure, he mounts to the surface; and, self-taught in the art of navigation, performs his voyage without either chart or compass, is himself the vessel, the rigging, and the pilot.—For a more copious illustration of this amusing and wonderful subject, see Nat. Displ. vol. III.

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ther he sleeps or wakes, is in a state of defence, and clad in jointed armour. The oyster, a sort of living jelly, ingarrisoned in the bulwark of native stone. With many other kinds of sea reptiles, or, as the psalmist speaks, "things creeping innumerable."*—I am surprised, at the variety of their figure, and charmed with the splendour of their colours. Unsearchable is the wisdom, and endless the contrivance, of the all-creating God!—Some are rugged in their form, and little better than hideous in their aspect. Their shells seem to be the rude production of a disorderly jumble, rather than the regular effects of skill and design. Yet we shall find, even in these seeming irregularities, the nicest dispositions. These abodes, uncouth as they may appear, are adapted to the genius of their particular tenants, and exactly suited to their respective exigencies. Neither the Ionic delicacy, nor the Corinthian richness, nor any other order of architecture, would have served their purposes half so well, as this coarse and homely fabric.

Some, on the other hand, are extremely neat. Their structures all symmetry and elegance. No enamel in the world is comparable to their polish. There's not a room of state, in all the palaces of Europe, so brilliantly adorned, as the dining-room and the bed-chamber of the little fish, that dwells in mother of pearl. Such a lovely mixture of red, and blue, and green, so delightfully staining the most clear and glittering ground, is no where else to be seen. The royal power may covet it, and human art may mimic it; but neither the one nor the other, nor both united, will ever be able to equal it.

But what I admire more than all their streaks, their spots, and their embroidery, is the extraordinary provision made for their safety. Nothing is more relishing and palatable than their flesh: Nothing more heavy and sluggish than their motions. As they have no speed to escape, neither have they any dexterity to

* Psa. civ. 25.

The wonders of the ocean,

elude the foe. Were they naked or unguarded, they must be an easy prey to every free-booter that roams the ocean.—To prevent this fatal consequence, what is only clothing to other animals, is to them a clothing, a house, and a castle. They have a fortification, that grows with their growth, and is a part of themselves. By this means, they live secure amidst millions and millions of ravenous jaws, by this means they are emarked, as it were, in their own shell; and, screened from every other assault, are reserved for the use and pleasure of mankind.

This is the birth-place of cod, the standing repast of Lent. This is the nursery of turbot, for its exquisite relish justly styled the pheasant of the waters. Hence comes the sturgeon, delicious even in pickle, and a regale for royal luxury; hence the flounders, dappled with reddish spots, and a supply for vulgar wants.—Here dwell the mackerel, decked, when haled from their native element, richly decked with the most glossy dyes; the herring, whose back is mottled with azure, and his belly sleek with silver; the salmon, in plainer habit, but of larger substance, and higher esteem, than either or both the preceding.—These, when shotten and lean, wander wildly up and down the vast abyss. When plump and delicate, they throng our creeks, and swarm in our bays: they repair to the shallows, or haunt the running streams.—Who bids these creatures evacuate the shores, and disperse themselves into all quarters, when they become worthless and unfit for our service? Who rallies and recalls the undisciplined vagrants, as soon as they are improved into desirable food? Who appoints the very scene of our ambushes, to be the place of their rendezvous; so that they come like volunteers to our nets?—Surely, the furlow is signed, the summons issued, and the point of re-union settled, by a Providence ever indulgent to mankind; ever studious to treat us with dainties, and “load us with benefits.”*

* Psa. lxxviii. 19.

and its various inhabitants.

We have wondered at our Saviour's penetration and power;*—his penetration, which, though the sea was at a distance, and walls intervened, discerned the fish, that had just swallowed a piece of money;—his power, which without any delay, brought the lawless rambler, charged with the silver spoil, to Peter's hook. But is it not equally wonderful, to observe such innumerable multitudes of finny visitants annually approaching our shores, and crowding our banks? which furnish our tables with a wholesome and delicate repast; at the same time that they yield to our nation a revenue,† more certain, and no less considerable, than the mines of Peru.

These approach, while those of enormous size and tremendous appearance abandon the shores. The latter might endanger the fisherman's safety, and would certainly scare away the valuable fish from our coasts. They are therefore restrained by an invisible hand, and abscond in the abysses of the ocean. Just as the wild beasts of the earth, impelled by the same overruling power, hide themselves in the recesses of the forest.—A ship infected with a pestilent distemper, is obliged to keep off at sea; and not permitted to enter the port, till she has performed her quarantine. In like manner, these monsters of the deep, whose very business is destruction, are laid under a providential interdict: only with this very desirable difference, that, as their presence would always be pernicious, they are never suffered to come near; their quarantine is perpetual.

“ Ask now the beasts, and they shall teach thee; and the fowls of the air, and they shall tell thee: or speak to the earth, and it shall teach thee;‡ and the

* See Letter VIII.

† We are told by the after-mentioned author, that the banks of Newfoundland alone, bring in to the proprietors of that fishery, a revenue of several millions every year. And they will, in all probability, be an unimpaired resource of treasure, when the richest mines now wrought in the world, are choked up or exhausted.

‡ Job xii. 7, 8. The earth is represented, as bearing witness to the

fishes of the sea shall declare unto thee:”—that the Lord is gracious; that his tender mercies are over all his works; that to us he is superabundantly and profusely good: having ordered all things in the surges of the ocean, as well as on the surface of the ground, for our rich accommodation, and for our greatest advantage.

One circumstance relating to the natives of the deep, is very peculiar, and no less astonishing. As they neither sow nor reap; have neither the produce of the hedges, nor the gleanings of the field; they are obliged to plunder and devour one another, for necessary subsistence. They are a kind of authorized banditti, that make violence and murder their professed trade.*—By this means, prodigious devastations ensue; and without proper, without very extraordinary recruits, the whole race must continually dwindle, and at length be totally extinct. Were they to bring forth, like the most prolific of our terrestrial animals, a dozen only, or a score at each birth, the increase would be unspeakably too small for the consumption. The weaker species would be destroyed by the stronger; and, in time, the stronger must perish, even by their successful endeavours to maintain themselves.—Therefore, to supply millions of assassins with their prey, and millions of tables with their food, yet not depopulate the watery realms; the issue produced by every breeder is almost incredible. They spawn, not by scores or hundreds, but by thousands and millions.† A single

immense benignity of the blessed God. Some minutes, or a short abstract of her testimony on this occasion, may be seen in Letter VI.

* To this, I believe, the prophet alludes, in that remarkable expression, “Thou makest men as the fishes of the sea.” Thou sufferest men to commit, without restraint or control, all manner of outrages. What should be a civil community, is a state of oppression. The weakest are a prey to the strongest, and every one seeks the destruction of his neighbour. Hab. i. 14.

† Mr. Petit found 342,144 eggs in the hard roe of a carp, sixteen inches long. Mr. Lewenhoeck counted, in a cod of an ordinary size, 9,384,009 eggs.—A fecundity perfectly amazing! but admirably adapted to the pressing exigencies of the watery world, admirably

its vegetable productions.

mother is pregnant with a nation. By which amazing, but needful expedient, a periodical reparation is made proportionable to the immense havock.

As the sea is peopled with animated inhabitants, it is also variegated with vegetable productions. Some soft as wool; others hard as stone. Some rise, like a leafless shrub; some are expanded, in the form of a net; some grow with their heads downward, and seem rather hanging on, than springing from, the juttings of the rocks. These may, with much greater propriety than the famous plantations of Semiramis, be called pensile gardens.—But as my walk reached no farther than the purlieu of the ocean; as neither you nor I have ever taken a single turn among these submarine groves; as Moses, Joshua, and Jonah, the only writers that ever made the wonderful tour, intent upon more important themes, have left us no memoirs relating to this curious point; I shall not venture to advance any thing particular on the subject. Only one remark I would offer in general:—

The herbs and trees, which flourish on the dry land, are maintained by the juices, that permeate the soil, and fluctuate in the air. For this purpose, they are furnished with leaves, to collect the one; and with roots, to attract the others. Whereas, the sea plants, finding sufficient nourishment in the circumambient waters, have no occasion to detach a party of roots into the ground, and forage the earth for sustenance. Instead therefore of penetrating, they are but just tacked to the bottom; and adhere to some solid substance, only with such a degree of tenacity, as may secure them from being tossed to and fro, by the random agitation of the waves.

We see from this, and numberless other instances,

contrived for the benefit and delight of mankind!—If we advert to this peculiarity, it will give the utmost emphasis to the patriarch's metaphorical expression, and an inimitable beauty to his prophetic wish, **דגן לרב** Let these my grandsons “grow into a multitude;” or, which is more exactly answerable to the original, “let them multiply abundantly, even like the fishes of the ocean.” Gen. xlviii. 16.

what a diversity there is in the great Creator's hand. Yet every alteration is an improvement, and each new pattern has a peculiar fitness of its own.—The economy takes place, such a difference of administration I mean, in his government of the rational world. In “choosing a heritage for his people,” and assigning a condition to each of his servants, there is a great variety with respect to individuals; yet a perfect uniformity, and complete harmony, with respect to the whole.—Some he calls out to a course of distinguishing labours. They make an illustrious figure in life, and appear “as a city set on a hill!”* Others he consigns over to obscurity. They are like the prophets, whom good Obadiah hid in a cave, and are styled “his secret ones.”† Those, the cedars, which stand conspicuous on the top of Lebanon; these, the violets, which lie concealed at the foot of a briar.

St. Paul was eminently qualified for busy scenes, and the most extensive services. He is introduced, therefore, into places of concourse. His ministry lies amidst the most renowned and populous cities. Even his imprisonment at Rome seems to have been a providential expedient for fixing him, as it were, on the stage of public observation, and in the very centre of universal intelligence. Where his preaching was like plunging a stone into the midst of a smooth canal; which affects not only the neighbouring parts of the surface, but spreads the floating circles over all the wide expanse.—Whereas, the beloved John, being less fitted to bustle among a crowd, is sent into the unfrequented solitary island; there to indulge the flights of heavenly contemplation; and receive, with uninterrupted attention, the mysterious visions of God.—Job shall have thorns in his path; have the dunghill for his seat; and be exposed, as a mark, to all the arrows of tribulation. Solomon shall dip his foot in oil; shall be elevated on the throne of royalty; and surrounded with the most lavish caresses of heaven.

* Matt. v. 14.

† Psa. lxxxiii. 3.

wisely fitting each for his particular station.

In all this seeming, this more than seeming contrariety, there is a display, not only of sovereign authority, but of consummate propriety.—The great Head of the church, acts like a judicious general; and appoints such a station to each of his soldiers, as corresponds with the ability he gives. He acts like the most skilful physician; and prescribes such a remedy for all his patients, as is most nicely suited to their respective cases. He knows the precise point of time, the particular place of abode, the peculiar circumstances of condition, which are most proper for each and every of his children; and like a tender as well as unerring father, what he knows to be best, that he constantly allots.—I said like a general, like a physician, like a father. But the comparison is low, the language is inexpressive; Christ is all that is implied in these relations, and unspeakably more.—O! that we may rejoice in the superintendency of such a Saviour; and not only resign ourselves to his will, but thank him for managing the helm; thank him for steering our course through the changes of time, and the uncertainties of futurity. Since, whatever our froward and petulant passions may suggest, the Lord's ways are so far from being unequal, that they have all possible fitness and propriety; they are ordered "in number, weight, and measure."

All is so very different from the prospects, which lately presented themselves, that I can hardly forbear asking, Whether I am not translated into a new world?—Where are the waving hillocks, covered with the Creator's bounty? where are the fruitful valleys, made vocal with his praise? No cultured field, no opening blossom, not so much as a green leaf appears. None of my late entertainments remain, but only the cooling zephyrs; which are no longer perfumed with the breath of flowers, but impregnated with the freshness of the ocean.—Yet, though all those lovely landscapes are withdrawn; though the gurgling fountain is silenced, and the blooming garden lost, I am not far from the origin, both of the odours which exhale from the one, and of the crystal which flows from the other. I am

The ocean the grand reservoir of the universe.

now upon the margin of that grand reservoir, which supplies the country with its fertility, and the parterre with its beauty.—The sea is the inexhaustible cistern of the universe. The air and sun constitute the mighty engine, which works, without intermission, to raise the liquid treasure. While the clouds serve as so many aqueducts, to convey the genial stores along the atmosphere; and distribute them at seasonable periods, and in regular proportions, through all the regions of the globe.

I question whether the united application of mankind could, with their utmost skill, and with all possible percolations, fetch a single drop of perfectly sweet water,* from this unmeasurable pit of brine. Yet the action of the solar heat draws off every hour, every minute, millions and millions of tons, in vaporous exhalations: which, being skilfully parcelled out, and securely lodged in the bottles of heaven,† are sent abroad, sweetened, and refined, without any brackish tincture, or the least bituminous sediment:—sent abroad upon the wings of the wind, to distil in dews, or pour themselves in rain; to ooze from the orifices of fountains;‡ to trickle along the veins of rivulets;

* I have not forgotten, what was lately affirmed in our public papers, that a certain ingenious gentleman, I think in the city of Durlam, had found out the art of sweetening sea-water.—What he produced, might probably approve itself to the taste, and not be without its usefulness. Yet I cannot but query, whether it will be found to have all those fine, balmy, salutiferous qualities, which distinguish and recommend the rain-water: which has been exhaled by the kindly warmth of the sun; has been filtrated by passing and re-passing through the regions of the air; has been clarified in the highest and purest tracks of the atmosphere; has been further refined and perfected by the searching agency of the winds.—I should very much wonder, if the puny alembic could equal this grand apparatus of nature.

† So the clouds are elegantly styled in sacred writ, Job xxxviii. 37.

‡ We are obliged to Clemens Romanus, for the most just and elegant representation of fountains and their usefulness, that perhaps any where exists. *Αενας τε πηγαι προς απολαυσιν και υψισαν δημοσιηδισαι, διχα ελλειψως παρεχονται της προς ζωνη ανθρωις μαζης.* 1 Epist. ad Corinth. He calls fountains, the breasts or teats of the earth. The

The vast advantages derived from it.

to rise in the cavities of wells; to roll in many a headlong torrent, from the sides of mountains; to flow, in copious streams, amidst the bosom of burning deserts, and through the heart of populous kingdoms; in order to refresh and fertilize, to beautify and enrich, every soil, in every clime.

How amiable is this goodness, and how amazing is the power, of the world's adorable Maker!—How amiable his goodness! in distributing so largely, what is so absolutely necessary, and so extensively beneficial! That water, without which we can scarce perform any business, or enjoy any comfort, should be every one's property: should spring up from the soil; should drop down from the clouds; should stream by our houses; should take a journey, from the ends of the earth, and the extremities of the ocean, on purpose to serve us.—How amazing his power! that this boundless mass of fluid salt, so intolerably nauseous to the human taste, should be the original spring, which deals out every palatable draught to mankind, and quenches the thirst of every animal! Doubtless, the power by which this is effected, can extract comfort from our afflictions, advantage from our calamities, and “make all things work together for our good.”*

Vast and various are the advantages,† which we receive from the liquid element: vast, as its unbounded extent; various, as its ever-mutable surface.—The sweet waters glide along the earth, in spacious currents; which not only exhilarate the adjacent country, by their humid train, and exhaling moisture; but, by giving a brisk impulse to the air, prevent the un-

comparison, I believe, is his own; and nothing can exceed it, as to propriety and beauty.

* Rom. viii. 28.

† The high value which mankind set upon this element, and the many benefits they receive from its ministration, both these particulars are very strongly expressed by the Hebrews; who call a pool or reservoir of water בִּרְכָה; which denotes, in its primary signification, a blessing, Cant. vii. 4. Isa. viii. 3.

wholesome stagnation of their own vapours.—They pass by opulent cities, and receiving all their filth, rid them of a thousand nuisances: which, when once committed to these fluid scavengers, are as effectually secreted, as if they were buried ever so deep in the earth.—Yet, though they condescend to so mean an employ, they are fitted for more honourable services. They enter the gardens of a prince, and compose some of the most delightful ornaments of the palace. They glitter upon the eye, as they float in the ample canal. They amuse the imagination, as they ascend in curious jet d'eaux. They yield a nobler entertainment, as, forming themselves into sheets of sloping silver, they fall in graceful or in grand cascades.—If, instead of beautifiers, we think proper to make use of them as drudges, they ply at our mills; they toil incessantly at the wheel; and, by working the hugest engines, take upon themselves an unknown share of our fatigue, and save us a proportionable degree of expence.

So forcibly they act, when collected; and most surprisingly they insinuate, when detached. They throw themselves into the body of a plant; they penetrate the minutest of its organized tubes; and find a passage through meanders, too small for the eye to discern, too numerous and intricate even for imagination to follow.—How difficult does a labourer that serves the mason, push his way up the rounds of a ladder, bending under the burden of mortar on his head! while these servants in the employ of nature, carry their load to a much greater height, and climb with the utmost ease, even without the assistance of steps or stairs. They convey the nutrimental stores of vegetation, from the lowest fibres that are plunged into the soil, to the very topmost twigs that wave amidst the clouds. They are the caterers for the vegetable world; or (if I may be allowed the expression) the sutlers, which attend the whole host of plants, to furnish them with seasonable refreshment, and necessary provision. By means of which, “the trees of the Lord are full of sap, even the cedars of Lebanon

from the liquid element.

which he hath planted."* And, notwithstanding their vast elevation, and prodigious diffusion; though they are abandoned by man, and deprived of all cultivation; yet not a single branch is destitute of leaves, nor a single leaf of moisture.

Besides the salutary, cleanly, and serviceable circulation of the rivers; the sea has a libration, no less advantageous, and much more remarkable.—Every day, this immense collection of waters, for the space of five or six hours, flows towards the land; and, after a short pause, retires again to its inmost caverns; taking up nearly the same time in its retreat, as it required for its access. How great is the power, which sets the whole fluid world in motion! which protrudes to the shores such an inconceivable weight of waters, without any concurrence from the winds, frequently in direct opposition to all their force! How gracious also is the providence, which bids the mighty element perform its tumbling revolutions, with the most exact punctuality! Was it suffered to advance with a lawless and unlimited swell, it might sweep over kingdoms, and deluge whole continents. Was it irregular and uncertain in its approaches, navigation would be at a stand, and trade become precarious.—But, being constant at its stated periods, and never exceeding its appointed bounds, it creates no alarm to the country, and affords very considerable aids to traffic.

The tide, at its flow, rushing up our large rivers, clears and deepens the passage; in many places spreads a copious flood, where a dry and empty waste lay before.—Is the sailor returned from his voyage, and waiting at the mouth of the channel? The flux is ready to convey his vessel to the very doors of the owner; and without any hazard of striking on the rocks, or being fastened in the sands.—Has the merchant freighted his ship? would he have it transferred to the ocean? The reflux tenders its service; and

* Psa. civ. 16.

The vast benefits derived from the ocean;

bears away the load, with the utmost expedition, and with equal safety.—Behold, O man, how greatly thou art beloved, how highly favoured by thy Maker! In what part of his works has he forgotten or overlooked thy welfare! Shew me a creature, point out a spot, in the formation or disposition of which, he has not been mindful of thy interests? “He has made thee to have dominion over the works of his hands, and has put all things in subjection under thy feet. All sheep and oxen; the fowls of the air, and the fishes,” yea, and the surges “of the sea,”* are subservient to thy benefit. Even these, wild and impetuous as they are, yield their willing backs to receive thy load; and, like an indefatigable beast of burden, carry it to the place which thou shalt nominate.

What preserves this vast flood in a state of perpetual purity? It is the universal sewer, into which are discharged the refuse and filth of the whole world. That which would defile the land, and pollute the air, is transmitted to the ocean, and neither mischief nor inconvenience ensues.—Those swarms of locusts,—which, while living, were a plague to Pharaoh, by their loathed intrusion; and when dead, might have caused a more dreadful plague, by their noisome stench;—Swept into the sea, were neither pestilential nor offensive. How then is this receptacle of every nuisance kept clean? Why does it not contract a noxious taint, and diffuse a destructive contagion; such as would render it a grave to the aquatic, and a bane to the terrestrial animals!—’Tis owing partly to its incessant motion, partly to its saline quality. By the one, it is secured from any internal principle of corruption; by the other, it works itself clear from every adventitious defilement.

A directory this, and a pattern for me!—Thus may divine grace, like the penetrating power of salt, cure the depravity of my heart, and rectify the disorders of my temper; season my words, and make all my con-

* Psa. viii. 6, 7, 8.

Anecdote of king Canute.

versation savoury?—Thus may a continual course of activity, in my secular and my sacred vocation, prevent the pernicious effects of indolence! Let me daily exercise, or be attempting to exercise, the graces of christianity, lest faith become feeble; lest hope contract dimness; and charity wax cold.

Now the tide begins to flow. Wave rises upon wave, and billow rolls over billow. Nothing can divert, nothing retard its progress; no, not for a moment. Though Canutus be in the way;* though his royal authority, and strict prohibition; nay, though all the forces of his kingdom oppose; it will never discontinue the advancing swell, till it has reached the destined point.—So, may I always abound in communion with God, or in beneficence to men; resigning one religious or charitable employ, only to enter upon another: and be thus pressing forward, still pressing forward to the prize of my high calling in Christ Jesus;—differing from those regular vicissitudes of the ocean, only in one particular; that my endeavours never ebb, my soul never

* Alluding to a memorable and instructive story, recorded of king Canutus: who, probably without having read, had nevertheless thoroughly learned, that excellent lesson of Horace;

Regum timendorum in proprios greges,
Reges in ipsos imperium est Jovis.

Some of his abject and designing flatterers had the impious assurance to tell him, “his power was more than human.”—To convince them of their folly, and rebuke them for their falsehood, he ordered his chair of state to be placed on the extremity of the shore, just as the tide began to flow. Here he took his seat, in the presence of the parasites, and many other attendants. Then, with all that dignity of air, and severity of accent, which sovereign authority knows how to assume, he said,—“Thou sea, the land on which I sit is mine; nor has any one dared to invade my rights, or disobey my commands, without suffering the deserved punishment. I charge thee, therefore, on pain of my highest displeasure, not to enter these territories, nor touch the feet of England’s monarch.”

When the rude waves made bold to enter on the forbidden ground; nay, when these uncourtly things presumed to rush upon the royal seat, and even to dash his majesty’s person; he started from his throne, and bid every beholder observe the impotence of earthly kings; bid them remember, that he alone is worthy of the name, whom winds, and waves, and universal nature, obey,

The ocean the great bond of union

draws back. Since this would be, if temporary, to my grievous loss; if final, to my aggravated perdition.

Consider the sea in another capacity, and it connects remotest realms of the universe, by facilitating an intercourse between the respective inhabitants.—What short-sighted beings are mankind! how extremely superficial their views! how unavoidable, therefore, their frequent mistakes! The ancients looked upon the bottomless deep, as an unpassable gulf.* If our forefathers were so egregiously mistaken in this instance; let us not too peremptorily pronounce upon any difficult or mysterious point; lest succeeding generations, or a more enlightened state, should cover us with the double confusion of childish ignorance and foolish conceit.

We have clearly demonstrated, and happily experienced, the very reverse of that grey-headed surmise to be true. The ocean, instead of being a bar of separation, is the great bond of union. For this purpose, it is never exhausted, though it supplies the whole firmament with clouds, and the whole earth with rains; nor ever overflows, though all the rivers in the universe are perpetually augmenting its stores, and pouring in their tributary floods.—By means of this element, we travel farther, than birds of the strongest pinion fly; and discover tracts, which the “vulture’s eye has never seen.”† We make a visit to nations, that lie drowned in their midnight slumbers, when every industrious person on this part of the globe, is bestirring himself in all the hurry of business. We cultivate an acquaintance with the sun-burnt Negro, and the shivering Icelander. We cross the flaming line, we penetrate the frozen pole, and wing our way even round the world.

This is the great vehicle of commerce.—Not to mention the floating castles, which contain whole armies; which bear the thunder, the fiery tempests, and all the

* —————Deus abscedit
Prudens oceano dissociabili
Terras.

Hor.

† Job xxviii. 7.

between distant regions of the globe.

dreadful artillery of war! what a multitude of ships, of the largest dimensions, and most prodigious burden, are continually passing the universal thoroughfare! ships, that are freighted, not with sacks, but with harvests of corn; that carry, not pipes, but vintages of wine; that are laden, not with bars of iron, blocks of marble, or wedges of gold, but with whole quarries of massy stone, and whole mines of pondrous metal. All which, lodged in these volatile storehouses, and actuated by the breath of heaven, are wafted to the very ends of the earth; wafted, enormous and unwieldy as they are, more expeditiously than the light berlin bowls along the road; almost as speedily, as the nimble-footed roe bounds over the hills.*

Astonishing ordination of eternal wisdom! yet most graciously contrived for the benefit of mankind. I can hardly satisfy my view in beholding this chaos; I can never cease my admiration, in contemplating its amazing properties!—That an element, so unstable and fugitive, should bear up such an immense weight, as would bend the firmest floors, or burst the strongest beams! —That the thin and yielding air should drive on, with so much facility and speed, bodies of such excessive bulk, as the strength of a legion would be unable to move!—That the air and the water, acting in conjunction, should carry to the distance of many thousand miles, what the united force of men and machines could scarcely drag a single yard.—Puny and despicable are our attempts; but great and marvellous are thy works, O Lord God almighty! “If thou wilt work,” says the prophet, who or what “shall let it?”† Neither the meanness of the instrument, nor the greatness of the event. A sling or a stone shall lay the gigantic bravo in the dust.‡ An ox-goad shall do more execution

* A ship, under a brisk and steady gale, will sail at the rate of 216 miles in 24 hours; persevering, if the wind continues favourable, in the same rapid career, for several days together: a course which, considering both its swiftness and duration, cannot be equalled by the ablest horse; perhaps not by the nimblest creature that treads the ground.

† Isa. xlii. 13.

‡ 1 Sam. xvii. 50.

Wonderful property of the loadstone.

than a battery of cannon.* Even “a worm shall thresh the mountains, and beat them small, and make the hills as chaff.”† God All-Sufficient is his name, and out of weakness he maketh his strength perfect—O! that we, my dear Aspasio,—that I especially,—may be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might! Then, as the light air is made to act with a more forcible impulse, than the most vigorous engines; as the fluid water is made to sustain more ponderous loads, than the most substantial works of masonry; so we, who in ourselves are nothing but impotence, shall be enabled to triumph over the legions of hell, and tread down all the temptations of the world.

How are the mariners conducted through this fluid common, than which nothing is more wide, and nothing more wild? Here is no tract to be followed; no posts of direction to be consulted; nor any shepherd’s hut, where the wandering traveller may ask the way.—Are they guided by a pillar of fire in the night, or a moving cloud in the day; as the sons of Jacob and Joseph were escorted through the eastern deserts? No; but by a mean, contemptible, and otherwise worthless fossil.—The apostle James mentions it, as a very observable fact, that the “ships, which are so great, and driven of fierce winds, yet are turned about with a very small helm, whithersoever the governor listeth.”‡ Is it not equally wonderful, that they should be led through such a pathless and unmeasurable waste, by so small an expedient, as the invention of a loadstone?§—Till this surprising mineral was discovered, and its properties were improved, navigation lay in its cradle; was, at best, a mere infant, that crept timorously along the coasts; was obliged to keep within sight of the shores; and, if driven

* Judges iii. 31.

† Isa. xli. 14. 15.

‡ James iii. 4.

§ I am aware, that other expedients are used for shaping a proper course on the ocean; such as making observations from the sun by mathematical instruments. But these, I believe, are only subordinate aids to the needle. The grand regulator is the magnet. I have heard an experienced sailor declare, he would rather be without his quadrant, than without his compass.

The Almighty delights to accomplish the greatest ends by the most simple means.

out beyond the narrow sphere of her land-marks, could neither ascertain her situation, nor pursue her voyage. But this guide,—when every beacon on the top of the hills is vanished from the acutest ken; when nothing but skies are seen above, and seas alone are seen below;—this guide points out the proper passage. This communicates an intelligence, which shines clear in the thickest darkness, and remains steady in the most tempestuous agitations. This has given, not indeed birth, but maturity to navigation; and turned her swaddling bands into wings. This has emboldened her to launch into the heart of the ocean, and enabled her to range from pole to pole.

Thus does God, both in the operations of nature, and the administrations of providence, accomplish the most important ends by the most inconsiderable means.—When the formidable Sisera is to be cut off, the blow shall be given, not by some puissant champion, but by the hand of a woman.* When Jericho is to be demolished, these impregnable fortifications shall fall, not beneath the stroke of battering engines, but before the sound of rams' horns.†—When a hundred thousand Midianites are to be routed, the Lord of hosts will gain the signal victory, not by numerous legions completely armed, but by a handful of Israelites, accoutred only with trumpets, lamps, and pitchers.—Who would have thought, that from the root of Jesse, a root out of a dry ground, should arise that great tree, which, “stretched her boughs unto the sea, and her height unto the heavens, and her branches unto the ends of the earth?”‡ That the despised Galilean and carpenter's son, should be the Saviour of the world, and the heir of all things? Nay, that a person, humbled like the meanest of slaves, and executed like the vilest of malefactors; nailed to a cross, and laid prostrate among the dead; that he should open the gates of grace and glory on lost mankind? That a few illiterate creatures, taken from the barge, the oar, and the net, should confute philosophers; and overthrow the strong holds

* Judg. iv. 9.

† Josh. vi. 3.

‡ Judg. vii. 19.

of idolatry, and plant christianity on its ruins?—This is a circumstance, which, though a stumbling block to some people, has considerably strengthened my faith. It is perfectly agreeable to the Almighty's manner. It is (if I may so speak) the distinguishing turn of his hand, and the peculiar style of his works. Whence does he raise the charmingly beauteous flower? whence the magnificent myriads of the forest oaks? whence the boundless and inestimable stores of the harvest? From principles which bear not the least proportion to their effects.—Besides, this most emphatically speaks the God. It “shews the lighting down of his glorious arm;”* and absolutely precludes all the pretensions of human arrogance, or finite power. It appropriates the honour of that supreme Agent, before whom the easy and the arduous are both alike. All men that see it must confess, “This hath God done.”

Through this channel, are imported to our island the choicest productions, and the peculiar treasures of every nation under heaven. So that we can breakfast upon a dissolution of the American kernel;† and see the rich nutrimental liquor froth in our cups, without ever tempting the foaming brine. We can steep the delicately flavoured Chinese leaf, in the waters of our own well; or spend the afternoon in our parlour, and be regaled with an infusion of the finely-scented Arabian berry. We can season the friendly bowl with the juices of the orange, or refresh our clammy palate with the pulp of the tamarind; without feeling that fervent heat, which imparts such a poignant relish to the former; without suffering those scorching beams, which give a fever-cooling virtue to the latter. We can pile upon our salvers a pyramid of Italian figs; fill the interstices with the sky-dried raisins of Malaga; and form a summit for the inviting structure, with the pistachio nut of Aleppo.—By this means, the eastern spices exhale their odours on our tables; and the western

* Isa. xxx. 30.

† Called the cocoa, which affords the principal ingredient of chocolate, and grows on a small tree in America.

extend to every class of the community.

canes transfuse their sweetness into our viands. We clothe our bodies with the vegetable fleeces* of the south, and line our apparel with warm furry spoils from the north. We can wear the pearl polished in the abysses of the Persian gulf; and walk on the carpets manufactured in the dominions of the Great Mogul; yet neither expose ourselves to the rage of boisterous seas, nor the more dreaded treachery of barbarous people.—In short, by this grand and beneficial expedient of navigation, every tide conveys into our ports the wealth of the remotest climes, and brings the abundance of the universe to be unladen on our quays. London becomes a mart of nations; and almost every private house in the kingdom, is embellished or accommodated from the four quarters of the globe.

Almost every private house.—Is not this more like rhetorical flourish, than real truth? Are not all the advantages I have mentioned, the peculiar portion of the rich? Is not the sea, like high life and the gay world, somewhat capricious and partial; bestowing lavishly her favours on the wealthy, at the same time that she neglects the needy?—Quite the reverse. Like her most exalted yet most condescending Creator, she is no respecter of persons. She deals out her liberalities to all; to the wealthy, such as are suitable to their circumstances; to the indigent, such as are best adapted to their condition. If she ornaments the abodes of the first, she employs the hands of the last; furnishes these with useful labour, those with elegant accommodations. What a multitude of industrious people acquire a livelihood, by preparing the commodities intended for exportation; and what a multitude of dextrous artificers maintain their families, by manufacturing the wares imported from abroad!

It is reckoned a valuable species of beneficence to

* Cotton, which is a sort of wool, encompassing the seed of a tree.—Its fruit is of an oval form, about the size of a nut. As it ripens, it grows black on the outside; and, by the heat of the sun, opens in several places, discovering the cotton through the clefts, which is of an admirable whiteness. See Cram. Dict.

Navigation procures a variety of employments for the industrious classes of society.

provide proper work for the poor. This withdraws them from many temptations, and preserves them from much wickedness. It hinders them from being a burden to themselves, and a nuisance to the public. They might otherwise be idle, and as vermin on the body-politic; or even mutinous, and as vipers in the nation. Whereas, by exerting themselves in a due subordination, and with becoming diligence, they are the very sinews of the community; and like the grand wheel in the machine of state, whose incessant activity distributes plenty, and pours innumerable conveniences through the whole.—What a master then, or rather what a mistress, is the sea! how extensive her correspondence, and how large her demand for workmen! Into what branch of trade does she not enter? What kind of ingenious science, or useful toil, does she not befriend? How many millions of honest but needy persons are engaged in her service? And how amply are they repaid for their pains?—“They that go down to the sea in ships, and occupy their business in great waters, these men see the works of the Lord, and his wonders in the deep.” They also that dwell among their own people, and abide in the villages, even they enjoy the bounty, and share the advantages of the ocean. For, though it is false philosophy, to suppose the waters themselves strained through subterraneous passages, into the inland countries; yet it is an undeniable truth, that their beneficial effects are transfused into every town, every hamlet, and every cottage.

Surely, the inhabitants of our isle have reason to turn the prediction of Moses, concerning the tribe of Joseph, into a devout and grateful acknowledgment:—“Blessed of the Lord is* our land. Blessed with precious things of heaven, with the dew, and with the deep that coucheth beneath. With the precious things brought forth by the sun, and with the pre-

* Is, (so I would translate the original,) not be; in the predictive, not precatory form. This implies a fulness of faith, and distinguishes prophecy from prayer; best suits the extraordinary illumination of Moses; and does most honour to the omniscient Spirit.

The superior advantages of England.

precious things thrust forth by the moon. With the chief things of the ancient mountains, and with the precious things of the earth, and the fulness thereof.* May we also enjoy “the good-will of him, who dwelt in the bush;”† and the grace of him, who hung upon the tree! May the eternal God be our refuge, and his everlasting arms underneath both us and our interests! —Happy then wilt thou be, thrice happy, O England! Thy temporal advantages, and thy spiritual privileges considered, it may truly be said, “Who,” or what nation, “is like unto thee?”

This for my country; now let me wish for myself:

God of all worlds! source and supreme of things!
 From whom all life, from whom duration springs!
 Intense, O! let me for thy glory burn,
 Nor fruitless view my days and months return.
 Give me with wonder at thy works to glow,
 To grasp thy vision, and thy truths to know:
 O'er time's tempestuous sea to reach thy shore,
 And live, and sing, where time shall be no more.

* Deut. xxxiii. 13, 14, 15, 16. Here seems to be an exact summary, and a poetical description of the riches of nature.—“The deep that coucheth beneath;” seas, rivers, fountains, wells, which lie in the bosom of the soil; and are sources of fertility and plenty.—“The precious things brought forth by the sun,” must certainly denote the herbs, plants, trees, and all manner of vegetables, with their respective fruits.—“The precious things thrust forth by the moon,” may probably refer to the mineral kingdoms: in the formation of which, that ruler of the night may have a considerable influence. The moon is confessedly the parent of tides; and may put in motion those bituminous and saline fluids, which, circulating through the pores of the earth, and fixing in beds of homogeneous matter, are supposed to commence minerals.—As our sacred philosopher has already specified the vegetable tribes, and (if I mistake not) the beds of fossils, “the principal things of the mountains and hills,” should signify the sheep, goats, and other valuable animals, which feed upon those vast declivities. Then, “the precious things of the earth,” may express those herds of larger cattle, which have their pasturage in the plains, valleys, and lower grounds. A sense which recommends itself from this consideration, that the wealth of the ancients consisted chiefly in cattle.—“The fulness thereof,” may be a kind of recapitulation: a comprehensive term, including the whole produce of the terraqueous globe; the magnificent liberality of Jehovah to his people.

† Deut. xxxiii. 16.

Theron pleads for a long letter from his friend.

You see, Aspasio, I have been studying the volume of nature; endeavouring to read its capital characters, and learn some of its instructive lessons. The sea has been the page; but how superficial is my perusal, and no less scanty my knowledge. Little, very little have I seen or conceived, relating to those works of wonder, which the vast unfathomable deep contains;*—the plants it produces, and the creatures it nourishes; its stupendous rocks, and subterraneous caves; the heaps of pearl, which are its native growth; and the loads of gold, which it has gained by shipwreck.—So superficial are my views of Christ; so scanty is my acquaintance with the gospel.

You, I presume, are sitting at the feet of that sublime Teacher; and attending to the dictates of his mouth, in “whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.”† Let me promise myself a communication of your thoughts, as I have freely transmitted a specimen of mine. And I will make no scruple to acknowledge the superiority of the exchange: that I receive

Χρυσια χαλκειων, εκατομβοι εννεαβοιων.

Or, as the eloquent Isaiah speaks; “For brass you will bring gold, and for iron you will bring silver;”‡ rendering me, by this intercourse, your more obliged, though it is scarce possible for me to be more than I already am,

Your affectionate,

THERON.

P. S. Monsieur Paschal, who was remarkably fond of brevity, makes an odd excuse for transgressing, on

* Should the reader desire to see this subject more largely opened, and more fully improved, I would refer him to *Contemplations on the Ocean*, lately published by my ingenious and pious friend, Mr. Pear-sall. In which a refined fancy, and a delicate philosophy, compose a chaplet for evangelical divinity: uniting some of their beautiful, and fragrant flowers, to adorn the gospel of God our Saviour,—to quicken and refresh the spirits of his people,—to invite and win the hearts of the disobedient.

† Col. ii. 3.

‡ Isa. lx. 17.

Aspasio promises compliance.

a particular occasion, his favourite rule. He intreats his friend to pardon the unusual length of his epistle, by assuring him, "he had not time to make it shorter."—I cannot, it must be confessed, adopt this philosopher's apology. For I have purposely lengthened my letter, with a view of setting, in this one circumstance, a pattern for my Aspasio.

LETTER X.

ASPASIO TO THERON.

Dear Theron,

I THANK you for your letter; because it entertains and improves me; I thank you for your postscript, because it is my encouragement and apology.—I am set down to write, with a copious stock of materials. It will be far more difficult to contract, than to enlarge. I must therefore acknowledge myself obliged to your candour, for assigning me the easier task.—That prolixity, which, in others, might be ungenteeled and faulty, is, in me, an act of complaisance, and matter of duty.

Though absent from you, I went with you in your late ramble. Your descriptive pen has made me partaker of the ideal delight; may divine grace enable me to share in the spiritual improvement!—When you displayed the beauties of the morn, breaking forth from the obscurity of the night; when you adopted that noble aspiration from our philosophic poet, I could not forbear adding,—“Thus may the gracious God, who commands the light to shine out of the midnight darkness, shine into our hearts; and give that incomparably glorious knowledge of his blessed Self! which,

Aspasio takes a pleasing review of his friend's letter.

though discernible through all the tracts of creation, and derivable from every work of his Almighty hand, yet no where beams forth with such complete and such amiable lustre, as in the person of Jesus Christ."*—Here we behold all the sublime perfections of the Deity, not only manifested with inimitable splendour, but operating for our own advantage. We behold them, as Job speaks; "for ourselves;"† and cannot but receive inexpressible refreshment and joy from the view.

When you walked beneath the shade of those huge, horrid, and enormous cliffs; both amused and alarmed at their stupendous magnitude, and frightful irregularity;—when you cast your eye upon the wide expanded surface of the ocean!—when you surveyed the far more unmeasurable arches of the sky; and meditated, in that awful solitude, on the wildest and most magnificent appearances of nature; I felt the same kind of devout astonishment with yourself. While the soul was wrapt in "pensive stillness, and pleasing dread,"‡ methought I heard a voice, or something like a voice, from the silent spheres, as well as from the sounding seas. It seemed to echo back, what the mighty angel, whom John saw flying in the midst of heaven, once proclaimed: "Worship him, who made heaven and earth, and the sea, and fountains of water."§—Worship him, who stretched out that azure pavilion with such amazing grandeur; who measured yonder world of waters, in the hollow of his hand; and before whom, this immense range of mountainous cliffs, is but as dust upon the scale."

When you described the dismal situation of the

* 2 Cor. iv. 6.

† Job xix. 27.

‡ It seems to have been such a kind, not of anxious, but of pleasing dread, which seized the disciples on the mount of transfiguration: *ησαν γαρ εκφοβοι*, for they were struck with a profound, but delightful awe. Delightful, otherwise it is not easy to conceive, why Peter should propose to build tabernacles there, or how he could wish to continue in those circumstances, Mark ix. 6.

§ Rev. xiv. 7.

Rejoices at the gracious change effected in him.

wretch, exposed on the edges of the tremendous precipice; hanging over the ragged rocks, and the unfathomable gulf; and cleaving only to a slender, treacherous, breaking bough: how heartily did I join in your adoring acknowledgments to that kind, interposing, blessed hand, which rescued us both from an infinitely more threatening and dreadful danger; rescued us, as slaves, from the dominion of the devil; snatched us as brands, from the inextinguishable burnings; and bid us (O marvellous, superabundant goodness!) bid us possess the liberty of righteousness; bid us inherit the kingdom of heaven.

When you mention the past indolence, and the present fervour of your prayers, I could not forbear reiterating my praises to God on your behalf. This is a proof, my dear Theron, that you are going in the way everlasting; for it is written, "They shall come with weeping, and with supplications will I lead them."* This is the work of the Holy Ghost, dwelling in your heart; for what saith the scripture? "I will pour upon them the spirit of grace and of supplication."† And our Lord himself mentions this, as the indication of a true conversion: "Behold he prayeth."‡—Had not Saul prayed before? Yes; and made long prayers too.—But he never, till that instant, was sensible of his undone and damnable condition; never cried to God, from the depths of his distress, or from the depths of his heart; nor ever solicited the throne of grace, in the all-prevailing name of Jesus Christ.—His prayers, till then, were somewhat like the motes, which fluctuate to and fro in the air, without any vigorous impulse, or any certain aim. But, in that hour, they were like the arrow, which springs from the strained bow, and, quick as lightning, flies to the mark.

I was pleased to find you, in the process of your letter, insensibly forgetting the narrative; and so engaged by the subject, that you spoke not as the re-

* Jer. xxxi. 9.

† Zech. xii. 10.

‡ Acts ix. 11.

Aspasio enumerates the rich benefits

later, but as the beholder. Thus may we always be affected, when we study the oracles of truth; study them, not as cold unconcerned critics, who are only to judge of their meaning, but as persons deeply interested in all they contain; who are particularly addressed in every exhortation, and directed by every precept; whose are the promises, and to whom belong the precious privileges.—When we are enabled thus to realize and appropriate the contents of that invaluable book; then we shall taste the sweetness, and feel the power of the scriptures. Then we shall know, by happy experience, that our divine Master's words, are not barely sounds and syllables, but “they are spirit, and they are life.”*

I was still more agreeably entertained with your picture of commerce, and of the advantages we receive from navigation. One advantage, however, I can specify, which is greater than any, greater than all, you have celebrated; an advantage, which will endear and ennoble navigation, so long as the sun and moon endure. The gospel, my dear friend, the glorious gospel, came to our island though this channel. The volume that comprises it, and the preacher that published it, both were imported by shipping. And may we not say with the enraptured Isaiah? “How beautiful are the feet of them that bring good tidings; that publish peace; that bring good tidings of good; that publish salvation; that say unto Zion, Thy God reigneth!”† It is pleasant to contemplate their message;

* John vi. 63.

† Isa. lii. 7. Never did language bespeak an enraptured soul, more significantly than this sacred exclamation. The prophet is all wonder and all joy. He is so enamoured with his subject, and so captivated with the glory of the gospel, that he can never say enough of its excellences.—“Good tidings;” the very best, that earth could receive, or heaven proclaim. “Good tidings of good;” a most comprehensive good, a collection of every blessing; or all good things in one. “Publish peace;” peace with God the everlasting King; and that sweet peace of conscience, which the whole world cannot give. “Publish salvation;” or that righteousness which is the meritorious

resulting from the imputation of Christ's righteousness.

and pleasant even to behold the ground on which they trod, or the very waves over which they sailed. This made the holy prophet rejoice in spirit, when he foresaw the extensive spread of his Master's glory, and the certain commencement of our happiness. This put into his mouth that affectionate and congratulatory address, which, in a very particular manner, is directed to us and our countrymen: "Sing unto the Lord a new song, and his praise from the ends of the earth; ye that go down to the sea, and all that is therein; ye isles, and the inhabitants thereof. Let the wilderness, and the cities thereof, lift up their voice; let the inhabitants of the rock sing, let them shout from the top of the mountains. Let them give glory unto the Lord; and declare his praise in the islands."*

We read, in Ezekiel, of the most magnificent fleet that ever ploughed the seas. The masts were of cedar,† and the benches of ivory. Fine linen, beautified with embroidery, floated to the winds, and formed the sails. Blue and purple rigged the vessel, and clothed the meanest mariner.—Let us suppose, that the freight of this splendid navy was proportioned, in value, to its sumptuous tackling. Yet how poor, how despicable were either, were both, if estimated with the treasures of the gospel; those divine treasures, which spring from the imputation of our Redeemer's righteousness; and which have much the same kindly influence on religious practice, as navigation, with all her improvements, has upon traffic!—Give me leave to confirm this assertion, by selecting a few instances, and applying them in a few interrogatories.

cause, together with that spirit of liberty and spirit of adoption, which are the rich and grand constituents of salvation. "That say unto Zion, thy God reigneth;" not sin and Satan, not lust and appetite, oppressive tyrants and worse than Egyptian task-masters; but the all-wise and infinitely gracious Jehovah; he, even he setteth up his pure, his peaceful, his spiritual kingdom, in the believer's heart, in the Gentile nations, and in all lands.

* Isa. xiii. 10, 11, 12.

† Ezek. xxvii. 5, &c.

One of the benefits proceeding from the imputation of Christ's righteousness, is pardon: pardon, not partial, but complete; a pardon of each sin, be it ever so heinous; a pardon of all sins, be they ever so numerous. For thus saith God the Lord, who sent both his prophets and apostles, preaching peace by Jesus Christ, "I will pardon all their iniquities, whereby they have sinned, and whereby they have transgressed against me."*—To learn the desirable nature of this blessing, let us step back into the annals of history, and attend a traitorous unhappy nobleman to his vindictive exit. His body is demanded by the ministers of justice. Reluctant and trembling, he is conducted to the scaffold. There the alarmed criminal sees the mourning block; sees the glittering axe; sees the coffin prepared for his corpse; sees thousands of anxious spectators, waiting, with eager looks and throbbing hearts, the fearful catastrophe. In a word, he sees death advancing, with all the solemnities of horror and woe.—Time elapses. The preparatory ceremonies are dispatched. The fatal moment is arrived. No longer respite can be allowed. He must submit to immediate execution. Accordingly he prostrates himself to receive the stroke. But, seized with new terrors at the poised axe, and approaching blow, he starts from the dangerous posture.—Again he bends, and again snatches his neck from the impending edge. A third time he lifts his pale countenance to the pitying clouds, and departing light.—Once more he bows to the block, and once more raises his head, in wishful expectation of the royal clemency.—Had a messenger appeared, at the critical instant, with a shout of joy upon his tongue, and a sealed pardon in his hand, O! how transporting the news! inexpressibly welcome the favour!—What was denied to his passionate desires, denied to the importunate solicitations of his friends, is freely offered to us in the gospel of Christ: a pardon of infinitely higher con-

* Jer. xxxiii. 8.

resulting from the imputation of Christ's righteousness.

sequence, which obliterates millions and millions of rebellious acts; which extends its blessed effects, not merely through the little span of life, but beyond the gates of the grave,—beyond the boundaries of time,—through all the ages of eternity.

How unfathomable is that immense flood, on which my Theron lately exercised his contemplation! The toiling plummets, with their length of cordage, are unable to find a bottom. Were the hugest milstones, or the highest towers, or the most spacious cities, cast into that prodigious gulf, they would be totally overwhelmed, and irrecoverably lost. Therefore the inspired prophet, to shew the boundless extent of the divine mercies in Jesus Christ, and to denote the fulness of their pardon who are cleansed in the Redeemer's blood, hath illustrated both by this grand similitude; "Thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea;"*—not one, or a few, but all their sins;—and not into shallow parts, but in the very depths of the ocean;—so that they shall never rise up in judgment; never be taken notice of; no, nor ever be remembered any more.

With an act of total indemnity, let us join a thorough restoration to favour.—If the wrath of an earthly king be as "the roaring of a lion;"† how much more tremendous is his indignation, who is able to cast both body and soul into hell. If the favour of an earthly sovereign be "as dew upon the grass;" how much more desirable and delightful his loving-kindness, whom all things in heaven and earth obey!—By the righteousness of Jesus Christ, we are freed from all foreboding apprehensions of the former, and established in the comfortable possession of the latter. The gospel renews and ratifies that joyful proclamation of the angelic host, "Peace on earth, and good will to men."‡ God is not only pacified towards believers, but well pleased with them in his dear Son. They are the objects of his complacential delight, and he rejoices over them to do them good.

* Mic. vii. 19.

† Prov. xix. 12.

‡ Luke ii. 14.

Aspasio enumerates the rich benefits

Nay, they are made children, “sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty;”* and if sons, then heirs of God, and joint heirs with “Christ.”†—The chief captain mentioned in the Acts, purchased his freedom of the imperial city of Rome, with a great sum of money.‡ If such a little transient immunity was so valuable in his esteem, who can express the worth, who can conceive the dignity, of this divine adoption? Yet it belongs to those who receive the gospel, and are interested in Christ.—They have access to the omnipotent Being; such free and welcome access, as a beloved child to an indulgent father. To him they may fly for aid, in every difficulty; and from him obtain a supply, in all their wants.—God, as the sacred charter runs, is their God. All his lovely, all his adorable perfections, are their glorious inheritance, and exceeding great reward. That eternal power, to which nothing is impossible, exerts itself as their guard; and that unerring wisdom, from which nothing is concealed, acts as their guide. His very justice is no longer an incensed adversary, demanding vengeance or meditating destruction; but a faithful guarantee, to provide for the punctual execution of the Redeemer’s treaty, and their complete enjoyment of its various blessings.—What a privilege is this! Rather, what a cluster of privileges is here! Weigh the kingdoms of the world; cast all the glories of them into the scale; and they will be found, when compared with these divine prerogatives, emptier than the bubble that bursts, lighter than the spark that expires.

In the gospel are given exceeding great and precious promises. Of such value, that they were procured by the blood of Christ; of such certainty, that they are ratified by the oath of Jehovah.§ So durable, that, though all flesh is grass, and all the goodliness thereof as the flower of the grass, this word of our God abideth for ever;|| so efficacious, that there are no such cordials to revive our fainting, and no such bulwarks to secure

* 2 Cor. vi. 18.

† Rom. viii. 17.

‡ Acts xxii. 28.

§ Heb. vi. 17.

|| 1 Pet. i. 23.

resulting from the imputation of Christ's righteousness.

our endangered souls. With these the bible is as richly replenished, as the clear midnight sky is bespangled with stars. They "are all yea and amen," consigned over as a sure unalienable portion, "to them that are in Jesus Christ."*

Another benefit, given in consequence of the Redeemer's righteousness, is the sanctifying Spirit. A most comprehensive blessing this! Our Saviour intimates, "that it includes every heavenly gift, is an assemblage of all good things."†—How singular a comfort must it be to blind Bartimeus, to have his eyes opened, and behold the all-cheering light of the sun!‡ So, and far more comfortable, are the enlightening influences of the blessed Spirit, when they shine upon the wretched creature, who sits in darkness and the shadow of death.—How peculiar a mercy for the impure and abhorred leper, to be healed of his inveterate disease! to feel the soothing sensations of ease, where sores rankled, and pain raged! Instead of enfeebled languors and loathsome deformity, vigour braces his limbs, and comeliness blooms in his countenance.§ Equally benign and equally salubrious, is the agency of the divine Spirit, on our depraved, polluted, sensual minds.—How signal was the recovery, and how welcome the change, when that unhappy creature, so wildly agitated by a mischievous demon, was re-instated in the peaceful possession of himself and his faculties! when, instead of unnaturally cutting his own flesh, or committing barbarous outrages on innocent travellers, he sat composed and attentive at the feet of Jesus;|| receiving heavenly instruction from his lips, and learning meekness of wisdom from his example. So salutary and beneficial is the transforming power of the Holy Ghost the Comforter; softening the rugged, sweetening the morose, and calming the passionate temper.—It is undoubtedly the utmost improvement, and the highest happiness of our nature, to have the image of

* 2 Cor. 1. 20.

† Compare Matt. vii. 11. with Luke xi. 13.

‡ Mark x. 52.

§ Matt. viii. 3.

|| Mark v. 15.

Aspasio, enumerating the benefits of imputed righteousness,

the blessed God reinstamped on our hearts. This is an earnest, and an anticipation also, of endless felicity; a bud which will open in heaven, and spread into immortal glory; a dawn which will shine more and more, till the Sun of Righteousness arises, and brightens it into everlasting day. This bud the sanctifying Spirit engrafts, this dawn the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ diffuses, in the barren and benighted soul.

In a word, receive this righteousness, and you have a title to all blessings, whether they be present or future, bodily or spiritual, temporal or eternal. From the necessary conveniences of bread to eat, and raiment to put on; even to the crowns of glory, and to the fulness of joy; all, all, are owing to our Redeemer's righteousness.—You see now, Theron, that our scheme has no tendency to impoverish your spiritual condition, or diminish your true riches; any more than those tracts of water, which surround our island, are detrimental to the wealth of its inhabitants. Detrimental! No; they are an inexhaustible source of treasure. They convey to our use the choicest accommodations, and the most elegant delights; such as would in vain be expected, if the whole ocean was converted into the finest meads, and most fertile pastures. So—but to apply this comparison, would forestall your principal question.

“Do not these favours, though unspeakably precious in themselves, tend to the introduction or support of ungodliness?” Quite the reverse.—Have we redemption through our Saviour's blood, even the forgiveness of our sins? We are redeemed, not that we may sink in supineness, or launch into licentiousness, but that we may be a peculiar people, zealous of good works.*—Are we made the children of God? Then let our light so shine before men, that others, seeing our good works, may glorify our Father which is in heaven.† This is the genuine consequence of such a doctrine, and the proper effect of such a benefit.—Are we vested with sacred privileges? These admonish

* Tit. ii. 14.

† Matt. v. 16.

shews its happy influence in promoting personal holiness.

us, these urge us, to walk worthy of Him, who hath called us to his kingdom and glory.* Shall the citizens of heaven be animated with no higher views, than the slaves of appetite, and drudges of the world?—Are we constituted heirs of the promises? The grace which they ascertain, is intended to make us partakers of a divine nature;† and the encouragement which they administer, inclines us to cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, incites us to perfect holiness in the fear of God.‡—such high immunities are a most endearing persuasive, not to disgrace, but magnify, not to provoke, but please, their unspeakably beneficent Author.

I might farther observe, that holiness is one of the most distinguished blessings in our system: nay, is the very central blessing, to which all the others verge; in which they all terminate.—Were we chosen from eternity? It was for this purpose, that we may be holy and unblameable in love.§—Are we called in time? It is to this intent, that we may show forth the praises of him who hath called us out of darkness into his marvellous light.||—Are we “created again in Christ Jesus?” It is to capacitate us for acceptable service, and to furnish us unto every good work.¶ “I will put my spirit within you, saith the Lord.” For what end? “That ye may walk in my statutes, and keep my judgments, and do them.**—Here comes in my Theron’s favourite endowment, sincere obedience. Far, very far from discarding sincere obedience, we would only introduce it under its due character, and in its proper order. Under its due character; as the fruit, not the cause, of our interest in Christ’s righteousness. In its due order; as following, not preceding, the gift of justification.

These privileges, my dear friend, are salutary, as the pool of Bethesda.†† They are restorative, as the waters of Siloam:‡‡ or like that sacred stream flowing from

* 1 Thess. ii. 12.

† 2 Pet. i. 4.

‡ 2 Cor. vii. 1.

§ Eph. i. 4.

|| 1 Pet. ii. 9.

¶ Eph. ii. 10.

** Ezek. xxxvi. 27.

†† John v. 4.

‡‡ John ix. 7.

Aspasio, enumerating the benefits of redemption,

the sanctuary; which healed the rivers, healed the sea, and made even the desert flourish.*—If justification by the righteousness of Christ had a tendency to subvert the foundation of holiness, to confirm the hypocritical professor in his neglect of moral duties, or discourage the sincere convert from the pursuit of real virtue; it would, doubtless, be unworthy of any acceptation, or rather worthy of universal abhorrence. But I dare appeal, not only to the nature of the doctrine, and the reason of things, but the experience of all;—yes, of all who “have tasted that the Lord is gracious.”† “Speak, ye who are enabled to believe, that God is reconciled; has received the all-satisfying atonement; and placed his Son’s righteousness to our account! that he regards you as his children, and will receive you to his glory!—Have you not, under such convictions, felt your hearts exulting with conscious joy; and every power of your souls springing forward, to glorify your heavenly Father,—glorify him by every instance of obedience, fidelity, and zeal?”

Can such invaluable benefits have a prejudicial influence on our practice, if, to the consideration of their superlative worth, we add that unequalled price, by which they were purchased?—He who is high above all height, humbled himself to be made of a woman and born in a stable; that we might be admitted into the family of God, and exalted to the mansions of heaven. And will this great humiliation, which is the basis of our happiness, prompt us to look down with contempt on others, or entertain arrogant thoughts of ourselves?

The Only Begotten and the supreme delight of the Father, was numbered with transgressors, and ranked with felons; that we might be joined to the innumerable company of angels, and associated with saints in glory everlasting. And will any one make this a precedent or a plea, for “walking in the counsel of the ungodly; for standing in the way of sinners; or sitting in the seat of the scornful;‡

All manner of evil was spoken of the faultless Jesus;

* Ezek. xlvii. 8.

† 1 Pet. ii. 3.

‡ Psalm i. 1.

shews its happy influence in promoting personal holiness.

his blessed name was vilified by blaspheming tongues, and his unblameable conduct blackened with the foulest aspersions; on purpose that we may be applauded, when we are judged; and each hear those transporting words, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant!"* Will this embolden us to dishonour our Lord, and stain our holy profession? Shall we from hence be induced to open the mouths of his enemies, and furnish them with occasion to speak reproachfully?

He went, galled with the lashes of the scourge, and penetrated with the pungent thorns; he went, loaded with the execrable cross, and marking the way with his precious blood! thus he went to his ignominious and tormenting exit; that we may enter Zion with songs of triumph on our lips, and with everlasting joy on our heads. Does this invite us to go, crowned with rose buds, to the house of riot; or go, muffled in disguise, to the midnight revel? Will it not rather incline us, to sit down at his pierced feet, and bathe them with our tears, and take delight in mourning for our crucified Lord?†

Behold! he hangs on the cursed tree. There, there he hangs; rent with wounds, and racked with pain. He pours his groans, and spills his blood. He bows his head, his patient princely head, and dies—astonishing, ravishing consideration! he dies for you and me. And will this harden our hearts, and arm our hands, to crucify him afresh by any allowed iniquity? Does not reason suggest, and christianity dictate, and all that is ingenuous enforce, the apostle's important inference? "If one died

* Matt. xxx. 21.

† The sorrow, arising from such tender and grateful views of the crucified Jesus, is that evangelical godly sorrow, which "worketh repentance unto salvation not to be repented of," 2 Cor. vii. 10. And is there not reason,—when we consider the pains he felt, the curse he bore, and the blood he shed,—is there not abundant reason to say, with Homer's afflicted hero!

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for all, then they which live, should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them.”*

He thought upon us long before the foundations of the world were laid; he remembers us, now he is exalted to the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens; and will never, never forget us, through all the revolutions of eternity. And is this a motive to forget his name; to disregard his word; or to imitate the shameful neutrality and indifference of Gallio? Impressed with a sense of this invariable and everlasting kindness, surely, we shall declare ourselves, as those captives in Babylon, concerning their dear native city, Jerusalem: “If I forget thee,” O blessed Jesus, “let my right hand forget her cunning; if I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth.†

Remember thee!

Ay, my dear Lord, while mem’ry holds a seat

In this devoted breast.—Remember thee!

Yes, from the table of my memory

I’ll wipe away all trivial fond records,

Which youth and observation copied there,

And thy remembrance all alone shall live

Within the book and volume of my brain.†

Is it possible, Theron, for the contemplation of such goodness, to weaken the motives, or relax the springs of obedience! As soon may lenient balms kill, and rankest poisons cure.—Is such a belief calculated to discourage duty, and patronize licentiousness? Just as much as vernal showers are fitted to cleave the earth with chinks, or summer suns to glaze the waters with ice.—When Antony made an oration to the soldiers, on occasion of Cesar’s death; when he shewed them their honoured master’s robe, transfixed with so many daggers; when he reminded them of the victories they had won, under their assassinated commander; when he farther informed them, that their murdered general had remembered them in his will,—

* 2 Cor. v. 15, 16.

† Psa. cxxxvii. 5, 6.

† Shakespeare.

shews its happy influence in promoting personal holiness.

had bequeathed all his fine gardens, and beautiful walks, to their use and delight;—heavens! how they took fire! Revenge sparkled in their eyes; revenge flamed in their bosoms; revenge was all their cry. They flew to the houses of the conspirators; laid them even with the ground; and had they met the owners, would have tore them limb from limb.—Some such resentment against sin, will a sense of our adored Redeemer's sufferings excite; especially when set home by his blessed Spirit, and considered in connexion with those detestable iniquities which caused them, and with those invaluable blessings which were procured by them.—Nothing is so effectual, to beget the most irreconcilable abhorrence of all ungodliness, to make the remembrance of it bitter as wormwood, the temptations to it horrible as hell.

Let me remind you of an incident, related by your favourite historian Xenophon.—Cyrus had taken captive the young prince of Armenia, together with his beautiful princess; whom he had lately married, and of whom he was passionately fond. When both were brought to the tribunal, Cyrus asked the prince, what he would give to be reinstated in his kingdom?—He answered, with an air of indifference, “That as for his crown, and his own liberty, he valued them at a very low rate. But if Cyrus would restore his beloved princess to her native dignity, and hereditary possessions, he should infinitely rejoice; and would pay (this he uttered with tenderness and ardour) would willingly pay his life for the purchase.”—Could such a declaration, so highly endearing, alienate the affections of the princess, or induce her to violate her fidelity? Let her own conduct answer the query. When all the prisoners were dismissed with freedom, it is impossible to express how they were charmed with their royal benefactor. Some celebrated his martial accomplishments. Some applauded his social virtues. All were prodigal of their praises, and lavish in grateful acknowledgments. And you, said the prince, addressing himself to his bride, what think you of Cyrus?—I did

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not observe him, replied the princess.—Not observe him! Upon what then was your attention fixed?—Upon that dear and generous man, who declared, “he would purchase my liberty, at the expence of his life.”* —Was her heart impressed, were all her thoughts ingrossed, by that benevolent offer? And shall ours be less affected with the incomparably more tender and endearing love of Christ?—He was not only willing, but actually laid down his life for us; a life immensely precious, and of higher dignity than all heavens. He laid down his life, not for amiable persons, or worthy creatures, but for vile earth, and miserable sinners;—purchasing thereby for us and our children, privileges of inestimable worth, and of everlasting duration.

Will not such beneficence, so unmerited, so unequalled, win the most reluctant,† and melt the most obdurate heart? The heart, which is not wrought upon by this miracle of divine compassion, must be steel, must be adamant; quite impenetrable, and absolutely incorrigible.—“O thou ever-blessed, thou all-gracious Redeemer, ‘thy love to us is wonderful; passing,’ I will not say, ‘the love of women,’‡ but the power of language, and the reach of thought! Who can hold out against such charming attractives? who can resist such

* Εἶω μὲν καὶ τῆς ψυχῆς πρῆαιμην ὥστε μηποτέ λάρχευσαι ταύτην. Xenophon de Cyri Inst. lib. III.

† “Beneficia,” says one of the ancients, “qui invenit, compedes invenit.” Which fine sentiment may almost serve as a comment on the beautiful and tender declaration of God by his prophet Hosea; “I drew them” to obedience “with cords of a man, with bands of love,” chap. xi. 4. He who made, and intimately knows our frame, knew that these motives would be most powerful in operation; most powerful on creatures, capable of love, and susceptible of gratitude. Therefore, he calls them, “the cords of a man.”—And if a deliverance from temporal bondage, if the settlement of Israel in all the plenty of Canaan, constituted so sweet an incitement to duty; doubtless, the everlasting benefits mentioned by Aspasio, together with all the endearing circumstances of their procurement, must be abundantly more engaging.—May the Spirit from on high rend the veil of ignorance and insensibility! let into our hearts the knowledge and faith of these great evangelical truths! We shall then want no farther demonstration, either of the propriety of the remark, or the efficacy of the principles.

‡ 2 Sam. i. 26.

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heavenly goodness? Only let a sense of thy love be always warm, always operative on our minds. This shall be instead of a thousand arguments to engage, instead of ten thousand motives to quicken our obedience."—Other motives may produce some external services, or hypocritical performances. Terrors may purchase the adulations of the tongue. But this conciliates the will; this proselytes the affections; this captivates the very soul; and makes all its powers, "like the chariots of Amminadib,"* ready, expedite, and active in duty.

Hear the holy apostle, giving an account of himself and his spiritual state. He speaks in language somewhat similar, though greatly superior, to the profession of the Armenian princess.—"So great is the glory, so rich is the grace, so superabundant are the merits of my Redeemer, "that I am determined to know nothing but Christ Jesus and him crucified."†—Ask the same zealous apostle, what prompted him to such indefatigable diligence, and animated him with such invincible fortitude? Why did he decline no toil, and dread no danger; rejoice in tribulation, and glory in reproach;‡ welcome persecution, and defy

* Cant. iv. 12.

† 1 Cor. ii. 2.

‡ That supreme affection to the blessed Jesus, which reigned in the hearts of his primitive disciples, could never have been so emphatically displayed by any strokes of eloquence, as by their own cheerful and heroic manner of expressing themselves, with relation to their sufferings. Far from regretting, I take pleasure (says the apostle) in afflictions; and embrace them, when occurring in my divine Master's service, with a real complacency, *εὐδοκῶ*, 2 Cor. xii. 10.—To you, adds the same apostle, and speaks in a congratulatory strain, it is given (*εὐχαρισθῆναι*) as a desirable privilege to suffer for the adorable Jesus, Philip. i. 29.—St. Luke, recording the abusive and cruel outrages, committed on two disciples, for preaching boldly in the name of Christ, uses a phrase remarkably gallant and spirited; "They departed from the council rejoicing, *ὡς κατὰξιοθησαν ἀτιμασθῆναι*, that they were counted worthy to suffer shame;" had the honour of being vilified and reproached, in so venerable and glorious a cause.—This passage is a fine exemplification of the figure, which rhetoricians style oxymoron. And Horace's *Dulce periculum*—*Splendide mendax*—*Quo beatus vulnere*—seem flat and jejune upon the comparison.

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death? This is the reply; "The love of Christ constraineth me;"* beareth me on, with the same strong, steady, prevailing influence, which winds and tides exert, when they waft the vessel to its destined harbour.

Shall we hear what another disciple, one of the most advanced proficient in divine love, says upon the subject; one who learned his knowledge, not in the school of philosophy, but on his Saviour's bosom? "This is the love of God, that ye walk after his commandments."† This is the natural fruit, this the certain evidence, of love to that glorious, transcendent, and adorable Being. What! Not that we supinely neglect, much less that we profanely violate, his sacred precepts, but that, with assiduity and delight, we make them the rule of our conduct.—"Charity edifieth;"‡ this divine love, far from razing the foundation, far from demolishing the structure, buildeth up†† the fair fabric of universal godliness.

Let me borrow an illustration from your own letter. When a pebble is cast into the smooth canal, it moves the centre, and forms a circle. The first creates a second; the second breaks into a third; they continue to multiply and expand themselves, till the whole surface is covered with circular undulations. Thus, the love of an all-gracious Redeemer,§ when "shed abroad

* Could you station a coward in the midst of a numerous army advancing to the battle; or rather, could you place a boat on the impetuous cataracts of the Nile; you would see what is meant by the significant word *συνεχεται*, 2 Cor. v. 14.

† 2 John 6.

‡ 1 Cor. viii. 1.

§ *Οικοδομει*.

|| I cannot but think, the reasoning is much more just, and the principle much more efficacious, in Aspasio's manner of stating the affair, than in the following famous lines:

Self-love but serves the virtuous mind to wake,
As the small pebble stirs the peaceful lake:
The centre mov'd, a circle straight succeeds,
Another still, and yet another spreads,
Friend, parent, neighbour, first it will embrace,
His country next, and next all human race:

shews its happy influence in promoting personal holiness.

in the soul by the Holy Ghost,"* will diffuse itself through the intellectual faculty, and extend to every species of duty; till the whole heart is filled with the image, and the whole behaviour regulated by the laws of the blessed God.—So that I am persuaded, there is a great deal of truth and solidity, as, every one must acknowledge, there is a peculiar spirit and beauty, in the apostrophe of our poet:

Talk they of mortals! O thou bleeding love!
Thou maker of new morals to mankind,
The grand morality is love of thee.†

You mention the loadstone, as most signally and most extensively serviceable in the seafaring business. Such is faith, so efficacious in practical christianity.—This, perhaps, you think a scanty and defective principle. The property of shewing the northern part of the world, may seem equally mean and inconsiderable. But as the one is the very soul of navigation, the other is the very life of holiness.—It is somewhat like the stone, which the Babylonian monarch saw in his dream, "cut from the rock without hands:"‡ which, though despicable to human appearance, was mighty in operation; destroyed the superb statue; be-

Wide and more wide, th' o'erflowings of the mind
Take ev'ry creature in of ev'ry kind.

Self-love too often acts on the affections, as a blast on the leaves, shrivels and contracts them. But the love of Christ, like a vernal sun on the tender buds, opens and expands them, till they become wide, as the extent of his gracious redemption; wide, as the compass of his rational creation.—By self-love I am almost necessarily determined to malign the persons, who cross my inclinations, and obstruct my interests. From the love of Christ, I have a cogent reason, and a most prevailing inducement, to love my very enemies.—How does St. Peter analyze this subject? not in Mr. Pope's, not in Lord Bolingbroke's method. Godliness, or a supreme love to the gracious God, he represents as the root or trunk; then brotherly kindness, or an affectionate regard to relations, friends, neighbours, as some of the grand and master-branches; after this charity, or a diffusive goodwill to all mankind, as the spread of boughs, which complete and adorn the tree, 2 Pet. i. 7.

* Rom. v. 5.

† Night Thoughts, No. IV.

‡ Dan. ii. 34.

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came a great mountain, and filled the whole earth. Thus will faith exert and diffuse its kindly, yet triumphant energy, to every corruption, that it may be subdued; to every virtue, that it may be cherished.

Faith is a real persuasion, that the blessed Jêsus has shed his blood for me, and fulfilled all righteousness in my stead; that, through this great atonement and meritorious obedience; he has purchased, even for my sinful soul, reconciliation with God, sanctifying grace, and every spiritual blessing.†

When the Almighty sunk the cavities of the ocean, and replenished them with the liquid element, he provided an inexhaustible source of moisture, for the refreshment of every animal, and the nutriment of every vegetable. In like manner, wherever he works this true faith, he plants the seed of universal holiness, and provides for the true propagation of every virtue. This persuasion of the divine good-will overcomes our natural reluctance, and excites a fervent desire to please our most merciful Father. This experience of the abundant grace of Christ, attracts and assimilates the soul; turning it into his amiable likeness, “as the wax is turned to the imprinted seal.”—What will be the language of such a person?

“Did your exalted Master empty himself and become poor, that his most unworthy servant might be ‘filled with all the fulness of God?’† And shall I not cheerfully deny myself the expensive pleasures of the world, that I may have somewhat to bestow on his needy children?—Has the death of Christ, as a punishment, satisfied the most rigorous justice for my sins; as a price, has it redeemed me from every evil;

* This definition of faith may possibly, at the first view, dissatisfy and alarm even some pious people; including, as they apprehend, too great a degree of assurance. But if they please to take it in connexion with the explanation and adjustment delivered in the 16th Dialogue, I hope, all cause of disapprobation or surprise will vanish: I flatter myself, that the sentiment will be found, not only comfortable for the sinner, but agreeable to scripture; and truly unexceptionable, as well as highly desirable.

† Eph. iii. 19.

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and, as a sacrifice, made my peace with God most high? And shall I not, by these mercies of my dying Lord, be induced to present all the members of my body, and all the faculties of my soul, as a living sacrifice to his honour;* to be employed in his service, and resigned to his will?—Do I believe, that my Saviour has not only rescued me from hell, but established my title to all the blessings included in the promises, and all the felicity laid up in heaven? And can I neglect to seek those invaluable blessings, or forbear to aspire after this immense felicity? Can I be so ungrateful as to affront, so insensible as to forget, the infinitely beneficent Author of both? Am I persuaded, that the Prince of peace is entered into glory as my forerunner,† and has prepared mansions of bliss for my final reception? And shall I not follow him thither in my hopes and my affections: be as a pilgrim below, and have my conversation above?—Is not this a most sweet and effectual method of gaining my heart, and if my heart, then all my powers to his blessed self?”

Such, my dear Theron, will be the effects of faith. Therefore it is not in vain, much less to the discouragement of real virtue, that the scripture lays such stress upon faith; so frequently urges the necessity and importance of faith; represents faith, as the principal work of the divine Spirit, and the great instrument of receiving salvation: Because it is a sure, a sovereign means of purifying the heart,‡ and never fails to work by love.§—Was faith, as some people are apt to imagine, like a candle put under a bushel, or like the lamps which burn in the sepulchres; it would then be an insignificant labour to inculcate it, and no better than an empty flourish of words to celebrate it. But nothing is more certain, than that faith is a vital, an operative, a victorious principle.

* Rom. xii. 1.

† Heb. vi. 20.

‡ Acts xv. 9.

§ Gal. v. 6.

Excellent effects of faith.

Christ is a store-house of all good. Whatever is necessary to remove our guilt, whatever is expedient for renewing our nature, whatever is proper to fit us for the eternal fruition of God, all this is laid up in Christ. And all this is received by faith, for application, use, and enjoyment.—Accordingly, when Zaccheus believed, he commenced a new man; his bowels yearned with compassion; the rapacious publican became a friend to the needy, and a father to the poor.* When the Macedonians believed, how eminently was their spirit ennobled, and their practice improved! Though pressed with afflictions, their souls overflowed with joy; and even in the deepest poverty, they signalized themselves by the abundance of their liberality.†—When the first converts believed, the change of their behaviour was so remarkable, the holiness of their lives so exemplary, that they won the favour, and commanded the respect, of all the people.‡—In short, it is as impossible for the sun to be in his meridian sphere, and not to dissipate darkness, or diffuse light; as for faith to exist in the soul, and not to exalt the temper, and meliorate the conduct.—That my dear Theron may be established in faith, may increase in faith, may abound in faith, is the most affectionate wish that thought can suggest, or friendship adopt. May his faith therefore be established like the mountain oaks; increase like the progressive stream, till it spreads and abounds like the overflowing flood!§

* Luke xix. 8.

† 2 Cor. viii. 2. Here is, especially in the original, as fine an antithesis, perhaps, as ever was penned. Since my last notes were so copious, I shall forego the pleasure of particularizing the beauties of this clause. I leave it to the lover of sacred literature, to admire the apostle's expression, to be charmed with the spirit of the Macedonian believers, and to derive edification from both.

‡ Acts ii. 47.

§ These images we may venture to style beautiful, because they are borrowed from the apostle: *βεβαιωμένοι εν τη πιστει*. Col. ii. 7. *προκοπη της πισ εως*. Phil. i. 25. *υπεραυξανει ηπιστες*, 2 Thess. i. 3.

Faith in Christ's righteousness, the fundamental principle of the gospel.

I intended to have closed my letter and confirmed my point, by a very memorable story. But however your patience may persevere, my time fails, and my hand is weary. The next post, if nothing unexpected intervenes, shall bring you the sequel. May it, when brought to my friend, be as "a nail fastened in a sure place," and give the rivet of conviction to all these important truths!—In the mean time, or rather at all times, I remain

Cordially and invariably yours,

ASPASIO.

LETTER XI.

ASPASIO TO THERON.

Dear Theron,

FAITH in the imputed righteousness of Jesus Christ is a fundamental principle, in that invaluable system of sacred and divine philosophy,—the gospel: by which the heavenly Teacher is continually training up millions of rational and immortal creatures, for the true perfection of their nature; for the final fruition of their God; or, in other words, for a state of consummate happiness and everlasting exaltation.—In this school, may you and I be humble students, and daily proficient! While others are ambitious of glittering distinctions, and sounding titles, may it be our highest aim, our greatest glory, to answer the character of believers! By this character, the supreme Lord distinguishes his chosen people, and denominates the heirs of salvation.—This character stands fairest in the book of life, and brightest in the annals of eternity.—This character, however neglected or dis-

Faith in Christ's righteousness, the fundamental principle of the gospel.

esteemed among men, will be remembered and had in honour, when the pompous names of statesman and generalissimo are known no more.

As faith is of such singular and extensive efficacy in genuine christianity, methinks, I would have all our meditations terminate on its glorious object, and be calculated to invigorate so beneficial a principle.—When we reflect on that stupendous act, the creation of the world out of nothing; let us remember, it was his act, who “obtained eternal redemption for us.” When we contemplate that immense theatre of wonders, the heavens and their shining hosts; let us not forget, that they are his works, who “brought in everlasting righteousness” for us.—Do we turn our thoughts to the ocean, that spacious and magnificent canal, which covers more than half the globe? It was formed by his word, and is obedient to his will, who “loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood.”—Do we take a view of the earth, that grand and inexhaustible magazine, which furnishes such a multitude of conveniences for so many millions of creatures? It is all his property, and wholly at his disposal, who “emptied himself”* for our sakes, and “had not where to lay his head.”—For thus saith the inspired philosopher, thus saith the oracle of revelation, “All things were made by him, and for him.”†

The great Creator has enriched this habitable globe with a profusion of good. He has adorned it with a variety, an order, and a beauty, which are perfectly charming. He has ennobled it with a dignity, a sublimity, and a grandeur, which are at once delightful and astonishing. In all this, reason cannot but discern a clear manifestation of power, a bright display of wisdom, and rich demonstration of benignity.—But will the Creator himself vouchsafe to be made flesh, on purpose that he may obey and die for his guilty creatures? This is what neither the utmost

* ΕΞΕΠΩΤΗΝ ΕΑΥΤΟΥ. Phil. ii. 7.

† Col. i. 16.

Its power on religious practice exemplified.

penetration of men, nor the very superior intelligence of angels, could ever have demonstrated, discovered, or conceived. This exceeds whatever the elements have produced, whatever the sun has beheld, as much as the extent and magnificence of the planetary system exceed the dimensions and furniture of a shepherd's hut.—To reveal this, is the blessed peculiarity of the gospel. To know and believe this, the distinguishing prerogative of a christian. To apply this, to dwell upon this, to connect this with all our observations of the universe, should be our favourite and habitual employ. This would improve wonder into devotion, and raise the entertainment of science into the joy of salvation. This will render every philosophical speculation a strengthener of our faith; and make the various scenes of nature, a guide to grace, and a step to glory. When this is done, then all things attain their proper end; and as they are by Christ, so they are for Christ.

But I forget myself, my business, and my promise. I am to establish the point by incontestable fact, not to embellish it by loose harangue. With pleasure I address myself to discharge the obligation; and exemplify, in a very memorable instance, the power of faith on religious practice.—From whence shall I fetch my exemplification? From the memoirs of the indefatigable apostle of the Gentiles? Here I find one, most concisely, and at the same time most forcibly displayed.

“After these things were ended,” says the sacred historian, “Paul purposed in the spirit, when he had passed through Macedonia and Achaia, to go to Jerusalem, saying, After I have been there, I must also see Rome.”*—Who can observe, and not admire, this plain unambitious manner of relating a series of labours, the most signally successful, and most extensively useful? Nothing in human conduct ever surpassed the greatness of the one, and nothing in historical composition ever equalled the simplicity of the other.

St. Paul had already reduced Ephesus and Asia to the obedience of Christ. He had already brought Ma-

* Acts xix. 21.

cedonia and Achaia into subjection to the gospel. He had long ago erected the standard, and spread the triumphs of christianity, in the regions of Arabia. Yet, as if he had hitherto achieved nothing, he bends his forces towards Jerusalem. Then marks out Rome for the seat of his spiritual warfare. After this he forms the same beneficent design upon Spain: including, in his comprehensive plan, the metropolis and the boundaries of the known world.*—The universe is but just large enough, to be the scene of his action; he never discontinues the charitable campaign, but with the last breath of his life; and he speaks of this unintermitted course of arduous and dangerous services, as if he was only going to make some friendly visit, or join in a party of innocent pleasure; “After I have been at Jerusalem, I must see Rome.”†

* Spain was then supposed to be the boundary of the western, as the Ganges was reckoned the extremity of the eastern world.

Omnibus in terris quæ sunt a Gadibus usque
Auroram et Gangen.

Juv. Sat. X.

† I am quite charmed, I must confess, with this very simple, but incomparably gallant manner of the apostle’s speaking. Far beyond all the pomp of panegyric, it displays the hero.

When a handful of Spartans undertook to defend the pass of Thermopylæ against the whole army of Persia; so prodigious, it was reported, were the multitudes of the Persians, that the very flight of their arrows would intercept the shining of the sun. Then said Dieneces, one of the Spartan leaders, “we shall have the advantage of fighting in the shade.”—Just before the battle of Agincourt, news was brought to King Henry’s camp, that the French were exceedingly numerous, and would take the field with more than six times the number of the English troops. To which the brave captain Gam immediately replied “Is it so? Then there are enough to be cut in pieces, enough to be taken prisoners, and enough to run away.”—A commanding officer, I think, among the royalists, being besieged by the parliamentary forces, was summoned to surrender the castle. The summons he rejected, and treated with contempt. Upon this the enemy threatened, that, if he persisted in his resolution, the walls should, without further delay, be battered to the ground. “What if they are?” was his answer, “I am not obliged to rebuild them.”

Such calm and undaunted sentiments, amidst circumstances of the most imminent danger, argue an uncommon fortitude and superiority of mind. But, if we consider the nature of the apostle’s enterprise; that it was nothing less than an open attack on the empire of Satan; a declared war against the whole idolatrous world; all which was to be

exemplified in the conduct of St. Paul.

Which of your Alexanders, which of your Cesars, which of all the renowned in Grecian or Roman story, can vie with the zeal and magnanimity of this poor, despised tent-maker? so poor, that he was constrained to work with his own hands for a morsel of bread; so despised, that he was frequently treated as the off-scouring of all things. Notwithstanding all these discouragements, what did he not attempt, what did he not accomplish, for the honour of his Master, and the good of his fellow-creatures?—He embarks in a shallop: he has neither shield nor spear; yet he purposes to command the ocean, and conquer the globe. What greatness of soul was here! he expects nothing but poverty,* contempt, and death; yet his heart is big with the hope of enriching, ennobling, and saving ages and generations. What benevolence of temper was this! Should you enquire concerning this illustrious champion of the cross. Who were his potent auxiliaries? None but the divine Spirit.—What were his mighty weapons? Nothing but the word of truth and grace.—Whence proceeded his intrepid, his enterprising, his all-conquering resolution? Only from a faith, a lively faith in Jesus Christ.

This, I think, is a sufficient confirmation of my doctrine. Nevertheless, I have another instance to produce; one that was exhibited in an age, when the glorious object of our faith shone with dim lustre and with distant beams; yet it may justly be admired, and will hardly be eclipsed, by the most enlightened among the christian saints.—To keep you no longer in suspense, the case, I mean, is that which Moses records, and the apostle celebrates. “By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac; and he that had received the promises, offered up his only begotten son.†

attended with persecution and imprisonment, was to end in martyrdom and death;—if we consider this, I believe, nothing will appear, at once so humble and so exalted, so modest yet so magnanimous, as the turn and air of his expression: “After I have been at Jerusalem, I must also see Rome.”

* Acts xx. 23.

† Heb. xi. 17.

As this is so singular an example of the efficacious and triumphant operation of faith; unequalled in any nation of the world, or under any dispensation of religion; you will give me leave to dwell a little on some of its marvellous circumstances.

Abraham was an eminent and distinguished servant of the most high God; favoured with peculiar manifestations of the divine will, and dignified with the honourable title of his Maker's friend.* Yet even this man is harassed with a long succession of troubles; and, which was reckoned in those ages the most deplorable calamity, goes childless.†

Long he waits, worshipping God with the most patient resignation. At length, an oracle from the Lord gives him hope, gives him assurance of a son. Joyfully he receives the promise, and rests in humble expectation of its accomplishment.—Several years run their rounds, but no pleasing infant prattles in his arms, or is dandled upon his knees. At last the handmaid becomes pregnant. But what a disappointment is here! This is the son of the bond-woman, not of the free.

How afflicting the case of this excellent person! His kinsfolk and acquaintance see their olive branches flourishing about their tables. Even his ungodly neighbours have children at their desire, and leave the residue of their substance for their babes. But Abraham, the worshipper of the Almighty, the favourite of heaven;—this Abraham is destitute of an heir, to support his name, to propagate his family, and inherit the bless-

* 2 Chron. xx. 7. Isa. xli. 8.

† There was so much gall in this calamity, that it embittered every other species of happiness. Visited by this affliction, the patriarch could taste no joy in his last signal victory; all his worldly prosperity was insipid; and he seems to have been incapable of relishing any other comfort: "What wilt thou give me, seeing I go childless?" Gen. xv. 2.—I would intreat the reader to take particular notice of this circumstance. It will have the same effect upon the representation of Abraham's obedience, and the whole series of his difficulties, as a magnifying glass has upon the objects to which it is applied.

exemplified in the conduct of Abraham.

ing.—O the straits, to which the believer is sometimes reduced! How does a sovereign Providence try his faith, as it were in a furnace of fire! not that it may be consumed, but refined, and come forth with augmented lustre to the praise of ever faithful all-sufficient grace.

God is pleased to renew the grant, and assure him more explicitly, that Sarah shall have a son. But this notice comes at a very late period in life; when Sarah is advanced in years, and too old, according to the course of nature, to conceive. However, the pious patriarch “staggers not through unbelief;” but “hopes even against hope.”*—Is it improbable? is it difficult? nay, is it to all human appearance impossible? So much the fitter for the exertion, and so much the more proper for the display, of almighty power.

At last the gift so earnestly desired, is vouchsafed. Sarah has a child,—a son, an Isaac; one who would be a source of consolation and delight to his parents; should “fill their mouth with laughter,† and their tongue with joy.”—With tender care, doubtless, this pleasant plant is reared. Many prayers are put up for his long life, and great happiness. The fond parents watch over him, as over the apple of their own eye. Their life is bound up in the life of the lad.‡—He grows in grace, as he grows in stature. So amiable is his temper, and so engaging his behaviour, as could not fail of endearing him even to a stranger; how much more to such indulgent parents, after so long a state of barrenness, and so many expectations so frequently frustrated.

Now, methinks, we are ready to congratulate the happy sire; and flatter ourselves, that his tribulations have an end: that the storms which ruffled the noon of life, are blown over; and the evening of his age is becoming calm and serene. But let “not him that girdeth on his harness, boast himself as he that putteth

* Rom. iv. 18, 20.

† Psa. cxxvi. 2. This is the import of the Hebrew name Isaac.

‡ Gen. xliv. 30.

it off.* Our warfare on earth is never accomplished, till we bow our head, and give up the ghost. The sharpest, the severest trial is still behind. God, the supreme and uncontrollable God, demands the child. 'Tis the will of heaven, that he makes his exit, just as he arrives at manhood.—“Where now, Abraham, are all thy pleasing prospects? How often didst thou say, in thy fond delighted heart, This same shall comfort us concerning our trouble?† Many have been my sorrows; but this child shall dry up my tears, and bring me to my grave in peace.—Alas! this lovely flower is to be cut down, in its fairest, fullest bloom. All thy shining hopes are overcast in a moment.”

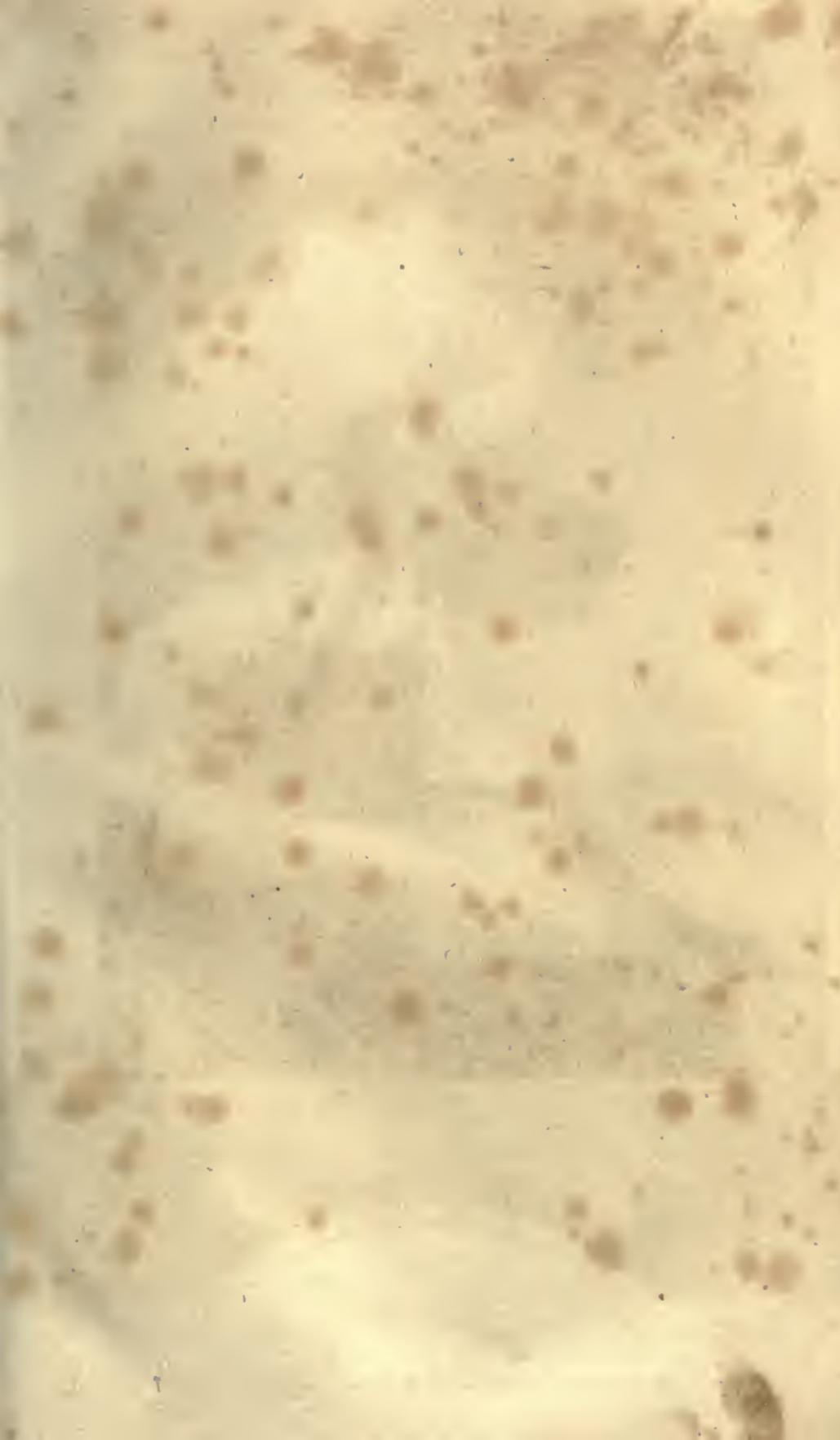
“Abraham,”‡ says God.—Abraham knows the voice. It is the voice of condescending goodness. He had often heard it with a rapture of delight.—Instantly he replies, “Here I am. Speak, Lord; for thy servant is all attention;” hoping, no doubt, to receive some fresh manifestation of the divine good-will to himself and his family; or some new discovery of the method, in which the divine wisdom would accomplish the promises, “I will multiply thy seed as the dust of the earth: and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed.”

“Take thy son;” adds God. And might not Abraham reasonably expect, that, since his son was advanced to the years of maturity, he should be directed

* 1 Kings xx. 11.

† Gen. v. 29.

‡ The sentence with which the inspired historian introduces this affecting narrative, is unhappily translated in our bibles, אברהם נתסה את “God did tempt Abraham.”—This expression seems, more than seems, to clash with the doctrine of St. James, chap. i. ver. 13; and cannot but sound harsh on those ears, which have been accustomed to understand by tempter and tempting, persons utterly odious, and practices extremely pernicious. Whereas the true natural signification of the original is, he tried, or explored. God sounded the depth and measured the height of his servant’s faith, in order to erect an everlasting monument of the victorious efficacy of this sacred principle, and exhibit an illustrious pattern to all them who should hereafter believe.





TELLERON & ASPASIO.
Letter the Eleventh.

Craig del.

T. Dixon scul.

exemplified in the conduct of Abraham.

how to settle him in the world with honour and advantage, where to find a virtuous and fruitful partner for his bed? He is commanded, not barely to take his son, but his only son; his son Isaac; whom he loved. How must these affecting images awaken all that soft complacency, and all that tender triumph, which are known only to the fondly-feeling heart of a parent! Must not such an introduction, so remarkably endearing, heighten his expectation of some signal mercy, to be conferred on the beloved youth; and would it not render the blessing peculiarly acceptable, more than doubly welcome?

Was he not then startled? was he not horribly amazed? when, instead of some renewed expression of the divine favour, he received the following orders? "Take now thy son,—thine only son,—Isaac,—whom thou lovest;—and get thee into the land of Moriah, and offer him there for a burnt-offering, upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of."*

Was ever message so alarming? each word more piercing to parental ears, than the keenest dagger to the heart. Every clause brings an additional load of misery; till the whole command swells into the most accumulated and aggravated woe.

"Abraham, take thy son."—Who but Abraham could have forborne remonstrating and pleading, on such an occasion?—Ananias, being charged with a commission to Saul the persecutor, takes upon him to argue the case with his Almighty Sovereign; "Lord, I have heard by many concerning this man, how much evil he hath done to thy saints at Jerusalem; and here he hath authority from the chief priests, to bind all that call upon thy name."† Sure, it can never be safe or expedient to present myself voluntarily before him, who came hither breathing out threatenings and slaughter against me. What is this but to court danger; and run with open eyes into ruin?—Thus Ananias; and with how much greater appearance of reason might Abraham have replied:

* Gen. xxii. 2.

† Acts ix. 13, 14.

“ Lord, shall I lose my child? lose him, almost as soon as I have received him? Didst thou give him, only to tantalize thy servant? Remember, gracious God, the name he bears. How shall he answer its cheering import? how shall he be a source of satisfaction to his parents, or the father of many nations, if thou takest him away in his unmarried state, and in the very prime of his years?

“ If sin lies at the door, let me expiate the guilt. Let thousands of rains, let every bullock in my stalls, bleed at thy altar. My wealth, blessed Lord, and all my goods, are nothing in comparison to my Isaac. Command me to be stript of my possessions; command me to roam, as a fugitive and a vagabond in the earth; and I will magnify thy holy name. Only let my child, my dear child be spared.

“ Or, if nothing will appease thy indignation but human blood, let my death be the sacrifice. Upon me be the vengeance. I am old and grey-headed. The best of my days are past, and the best of my services done. If this tottering wall tumbles, there will be little or no cause for regret. But if the pillar of my house, and the foundation of my hopes,—if he be snatched from me, what good will my life do me? ‘ O my son! my son! would to God I might die for thee!’*

“ If it must be a blooming youth, in the flower of his days, be pleased, most merciful God, to select the victim from some fruitful family. There are those who abound in children. Children are multiplied unto them; and though many were removed, yet would their table be full. There are those who have flocks and herds; whereas I have only this little lamb,† the very solace of my soul, and the stay of my declining years; and shall this be taken away, while all those are left?”

Yes, Abraham; it is thy son, and not another’s, that is marked for the victim.—What distress, had he not been supported by faith, what exquisite distress

* 2 Sam. xviii. 33.

† 2 Sam. xii. 5.

exemplified in the conduct of Abraham.

must have overwhelmed this affectionate parent! How could he refrain from crying out, and with a flood of tears:—"If the decree cannot be reversed, if it must be the fruit of my own body, O! that Ishmael, the son of the handmaid—How shall I speak it? my heart bleeds at the thought; at the thought even of his expiring agonies, and untimely death. But as for Isaac, the son of my beloved spouse, the son of my old age, the crown of all my labours:—how, how shall I survive such a loss? The blow that goes to his heart, must be fatal to us both.

"Yet, if he must die, and there is no remedy; may he not at least expire by a natural dissolution? May not some common distemper unloose the cords of life, and lay him down gently in the tomb? May not his fond mother and myself seal his closing eyes, and soften his dying pangs by our tender offices?"

No, Abraham. Thy son must be slaughtered on the altar. He shall have no other bed of death, than the pile of hewn wood; no other winding-sheet, than his own clotted gore. The sacrificing knife, and not any common disease, shall bring him to his end.—And think not to satisfy thy sorrowing fondness, by paying him the last honours of a decent interment. It is the Lord's will, that he be cut in pieces, consumed to ashes, and made a burnt-offering; so that nothing shall remain, to be preserved or embalmed. It shall not be in thy power to soothe thy grief, by resorting to his grave, and weeping at his sepulchre, and saying—Here lies Isaac.

"But if all must be executed, God grant these eyes may never behold the dismal tragedy! If my Isaac must be bound hand and foot for the slaughter, if he must receive the steel into his bosom, and welter in his own innocent blood, heaven forbid that I should behold so killing a spectacle!"

Even this mitigation cannot be granted. Thou must not only be an eye-witness of his agony, but be the executioner of thy Isaac. Thy hands must lift the

deadly weapon; thy hands must point it to the beloved breast; thy own hands must urge its way, through the gushing veins, and shivering flesh, till it be plunged in the throbbing heart. God will not permit the work to be done by another. The father, the father must be the butcher.

Is not the wretched father stunned and thunder-struck? does he not stand fixed in horror, and speechless with grief? What words can be mournful enough to express his sorrows? Unheard of, shocking affair! Nature recoils at the very thought! How then can the best of fathers perform the deed?—How shall he answer it to the wife of his bosom, the mother of the lovely youth?—How can he justify it to the world? They will never be persuaded, that the God of goodness can delight in cruelty, or authorize so horrid an action.—Will they not take up a taunting proverb, and say at every turn? “There goes the man, the monster rather, who has imbrued his hands in his own son’s blood! This is he that pretends to piety, and yet could be so savage, as to assassinate, coolly and deliberately assassinate an only child!”—Might not thousands of such reflections crowd into his thoughts, and rack his very soul?

But God is unchangeable. Positive is his word, and must be obeyed; obeyed immediately too. Take now thy son. The Lord’s command requireth speed. No time is to be lost, in bidding adieu to his relations, or in fruitless supplications for revoking the doom.—Nay, cheerfully as well as instantly must this command be fulfilled. The great Jehovah expects alacrity in his service.—Prodigious trial indeed! Yet not too great for a faith, which the divine Spirit infuses, and the divine Spirit sustains.

The patriarch knew full well, that obedience is no obedience, unless it be willing and cheerful. Therefore he consults not with flesh and blood. He is deaf to the arguing of carnal reason, and regards not the yearnings of paternal affection. Without a murmur-

exemplified in the conduct of Abraham.

ing word, without a moment's delay,* he sets forward on his journey; not so much as betraying the least uneasiness, to alarm his wife; nor heaving the least sigh, to surprise his attendants.—And canst thou, Abraham, canst thou persist in thy purpose? can thy heart firmly resolve, can thy hand steadily execute, this inexpressibly severe task? Most triumphant faith indeed! Deservedly art thou styled, “the father of the faithful.”† Thy faith is stronger than all the ties of affection; stronger than all the pleas of nature, or all the terrors of death,—even of a death far more dreadful than thy own.

And now must he travel, during these tedious, and, one would think, most melancholy days; with his Isaac constantly before his eyes: with the bloody scene continually in his apprehensions; and nothing to divert his mind from dwelling on every bitter circumstance, and all the grievous consequences. “On the third day, Abraham lifted up his eyes, and beheld afar off the appointed place.” His servants are ordered to keep their distance; while himself, with the fire and the knife in his hands; and his son, with the burden of wood on his shoulders, “went both of them together.”—Who does not pity the sweet youth, toiling under that load, which must soon reek with his blood, and soon reduce him to ashes?—Meanwhile the intended victim, wondering to see all these preparations made, and no proper animal near, asks this pertinent question: “My father, behold the fire and the wood; but where is the lamb for a burnt-offering?” Sure this endearing speech, which discovered such a knowledge of religion, and such a concern for its duties, must rouse the father's anguish, and shake his determination. How can he be the death of so much innocence, and so much piety?

Faith overcomes all difficulties. Unmoved and inflexible, the patriarch replies, “God will provide him-

* For it is written, “He rose early in the morning,” ver. 3.

† Rom. iv. 18.

self a lamb for a burnt-offering, my son.”* After this he discloses the strange, the startling secret: “Thou thyself, my dear child, art destined to this purpose. The God who bestowed thee on my longing desires, is pleased to require thee again at my hand. The Lord gave, and the Lord taketh away, let us both adore the name of the Lord. Let us confide in his promised goodness, and unanimously profess, Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him.”—It does not appear, that the amiable youth resisted or gainsaid. He had strength to oppose, and speed enough to escape,† the attempts of an aged father. Either or both of which the law of self-preservation might seem to dictate, and the light of reason to justify. But Isaac knew that his father was a prophet. In this prophetic character, he sees and acknowledges the warrant of heaven. And since his Creator calls, he is content to go.—Excellent Isaac! who does not admire thy courage? who is not charmed with thy resignation? and must we, in a few minutes, must we see thee a pale, a bloody, a breathless corpse?

Methinks, I shudder as we draw near the direful catastrophe. The altar is built; the wood laid in order; all things are ready for the solemn service; and Isaac offers his willing throat to the knife.—Nevertheless, that the work of destiny may be sure, and no

* Abraham in this answer, like many of the other prophets in their predictions, seems not to have thoroughly understood the import of his own words. What he himself meant, I apprehend, is represented in the paraphrase of his speech. Yet God so over-ruled his tongue, that it more fully expressed the divine decree, than the paternal idea.

“God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt-offering, my son.” Thus the words are placed in the Hebrew. *My son* comes last, and closes the reply; that the tender accents may be left to vibrate on the father’s ear, and the dear distressing image continue playing before his mind.—This, I think, is a delicacy not to be overlooked, and increases the pathos of the narrative.

† According to Josephus, Isaac was, when he submitted himself to the slaughter, about twenty-five years old. Others think, his age was thirty-three; which makes him more exactly resemble his suffering Lord. Then his father must be an hundred and thirty years old. Either account will justify Aspasio’s supposition,

exemplified in the conduct of Abraham.

one particular relating to a sacrifice omitted, "Abraham binds his son." I have known a stubborn malefactor, quite unalarmed, when sentenced to the ignominious tree; not at all impressed with the most awful representations of eternal judgment; yet when a person came to measure him for his coffin, the hardened wretch was hard no longer. He startled, turned pale, and trembled in every joint. Even such a circumstance makes no impression on Abraham; neither alters his purpose, nor changes his countenance. He measures his Isaac; measures those limbs, which he had so frequently and so tenderly caressed; and if not for the coffin, yet for immediate slaughter.

Having bound him,—surprising resolution!—bound him for the sword and for the flame, he "lays him upon the altar on the wood." There, now, lies Isaac; the dear, the dutiful, the religious Isaac! Abraham's joy; Sarah's delight; the heir of the promises! there he lies, all meek and resigned; expecting every moment the stroke of death to fall.—O parents! parents! do not your bowels yearn? is not humanity itself distressed at the scene? Say, thou who art a father, what thinkest thou of Abraham's obedience? couldst thou, to such a son, have acted such a part?

See! the father, resolute to the very last, unsheaths the murdering blade; makes bare the innocent bosom; and marks the place, where life may find the speediest exit. "His heart is fixed!" he stretches his arm: and now, even now is aiming the mortal blow;—when,—rejoice, O ye worshippers of a gracious God! break forth into singing, ye that are in pain for the tried parent! the Lord Almighty interposes, in the article of extreme need.* The Angel of the covenant

* Upon this most seasonable interposition, the inspired historian makes a very judicious and edifying remark; which seems to be greatly obscured, if not entirely spoiled, by our translation; "In the mount of the Lord it shall be seen."—I must confess, I have always been puzzled to find, not only a pertinent sense, but any sense at all, in these words. Whereas the original is as clear in its signification, as it is apposite to the purpose.—*יָדָאָה בְּרֵךְ יְהוָה* "In the mount the

speaks from heaven, and withholds the lifted hand, in the very act to strike. God, who only intended to manifest his faith, and make it honourable, bids him desist. God applauds his obedience; substitutes another sacrifice in Isaac's stead; renews his covenant with the father; and not only reprieves the life of the son, but promises him a numerous and illustrious issue; promises to make him the progenitor of the Messiah, and thereby a public blessing to all the nations of the earth.

Tell me now, Theron, was there ever such an astonishing effort of obedience; such a perfect prodigy of resignation. Yet this hath faith done.*—If you should ask, How was it possible for Abraham to perform all this, in the manner described? The answer is obvious: Because Abraham believed; or, in other words, was fully persuaded that the God, who had given him this son from the barren womb, was able to raise him

Lord will be seen: or, in the mount the Lord will provide." q. d. "This memorable event gave rise to, at least is an eminent exemplification of, that proverbial expression, which is commonly used at this day. In the mount of difficulty, or in the very crisis of need, when matters seem to be irretrievable and desperate, then the Lord appears as a present help. Man's extremity is God's opportunity." See Gen. xxii. 14.

* Heb. xi. 17. "By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac."—The faith, of which such glorious things are spoken, to which such admirable achievements are ascribed, throughout this whole chapter, was a faith in "the seed of the woman," the promised Messiah.—Or, could it be demonstrated, (which, I will venture to conclude, is impossible,) that in all these heroic instances of obedience, there was no believing regard to Christ; no apprehension of his unspeakable love; no application of his transcendent merits; our argument would not lose its force, but strike with redoubled energy. For, if a belief in very inferior manifestations of the divine goodness, faithfulness, and power, wrought so efficaciously on those ancient worthies; how much more victoriously must the same principle act, under far brighter displays of all the supreme perfections, in the person of Jesus Christ!—I would only add, that so long as this chapter remains in the Bible, it will furnish an unanswerable confutation of those objections, which suppose the doctrine of faith to have an unkindly influence on religious or virtuous practice. Against all such cavils, "it will stand fast as the moon, and as the faithful witness in heaven."

exemplified in the conduct of Abraham.

again from the smoking ashes.*—As the same God, who required this sacrifice, had expressly declared, “In Isaac shall thy seed be called;” the patriarch doubted not, but the promise would, in a way known to infinite wisdom, be punctually accomplished.—Hence he made no dispute, and felt no reluctance. His faith banished every uneasy apprehension, and neither fear nor sorrow had place in his breast. By faith he was enabled, speedily and cheerfully, without so much as a parting tear,† to obey this unparalleled precept.

* He seems to have expected, not only the certain, but the immediate restoration of his slain son; that he should be revived on the very spot, before he left the place, so as to accompany his return. For he says to the servants, not I, but “we will go, and worship and return.” נשובה ver. 5.

† This account is so very extraordinary, that I shall not be surprised if the reader finds some difficulty in giving his assent to it: especially, as he may have accustomed himself to form very different conceptions of this remarkable affair: and may possibly be confirmed in a different train of ideas, by seeing a representation of the story in a celebrated print: where the father appears, clasping his son in a tender embrace; bedewing him with his tears; and suffering as much through grief, as the devoted youth is going to suffer by the knife.—But the engraver, I apprehend, had not so attentively examined the circumstances of the sacred narrative, nor so carefully compared them with other passages of scripture, as a judicious and worthy friend of mine; from whom I learned to consider this wonderful transaction in the above-represented view. And I must confess, the more I revolve it in my mind, the more I am convinced of its propriety.

I flatter myself, the reader will be of the same opinion, if he please to consult the tenth chapter of Leviticus; where Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, are devoured by fire from the Lord. Yet Aaron is not allowed to mourn, even at such a terrible and afflictive visitation. And when through the frailty of human nature, he could not wholly refrain, he durst not presume to eat of the sin-offering. “Such things,” says he, “have befallen me; if I had eaten of the sin-offering, should it have been accepted in the sight of the Lord?”—Let me add, that we find not the least indication of such agonizing sorrow, nor indeed of any sorrow at all, in the history as related by Moses. Neither could Abraham have been a proper type of the eternal Father, making his only begotten Son a sacrifice for sin, if he had not willingly offered up Isaac. Indeed to offer willingly, seems to have been absolutely necessary, in every acceptable oblation, and every religious service. See 2 Cor. ix. 7. 1 Chron. xxviii. 9.

Faith the root of all evangelical obedience.

And if all this, which would otherwise have been utterly impracticable, was wrought by faith; you need not suspect, of weakness and insufficiency, so approved a principle. Far from enervating, it will invigorate every good disposition; and instead of damping, will give life to every religious duty.— Cherish faith, and you will of course cultivate obedience. Water this root, and the branches of universal godliness will assuredly partake the beneficial effects; will spread their honours, and bring forth their fruits.—Through the power of faith, the saints have wrought righteousness, in all its magnanimous and heroic acts.—The doctrine of faith is called by St. Paul, “a doctrine according to godliness;”^{*} exquisitely contrived to answer all the ends, and secure every interest of real piety.—The grace of faith St. Jude styles, “our most holy faith;”[†] intimating that it is not only productive of holiness, but that the most refined and exalted holiness arises from this stock.

Let us then be diligent to exercise, and careful to increase, faith in Jesus Christ. Let us maintain the same zealous solicitude for this leading capital grace, as the renowned Epaminondas expressed for his shield. When that gallant general was, in an engagement with the enemy, struck to the ground; his soldiers carried him off, breathless and fainting, to his tent. The very moment he opened his eyes, and recovered the use of his speech, he asked—not whether his wound was mortal; not whether his troops were routed; but whether his shield was safe?—May we be enabled, my dear friend, to keep our shield safe! May we be strong, be steady, be lively in faith! Then, I doubt not, we shall give glory to God, receive comfort to ourselves, and abound in the works of the Lord.

Nothing can be more pertinent to my purpose, than

^{*} 1 Tim. vi. 2.

[†] Jude 20.

The penitent's distress often the greatest just before he enters into liberty.

the apostle's prayer; That we "mây know what is the hope of our calling in Christ Jesus, and what is the exceeding greatness of his power toward them who believe." And nothing can be more expressive of the very soul of

Your affectionate,

ASPASIO.

LETTER XII.

ASPASIO TO THERON.

Dear Theron,

IT is very probable, while I am reading yours, you are perusing mine. But how unlike is my friend to the representation he receives! How unlike the satisfied, unsuspecting, cheerful Abraham! Why this dejected air in your temper? why those pensive strokes in your letter?—Let me anticipate your reply, and make answer to myself.—This gloom, I trust, is a sign of approaching day. Just before the morning dawn, the nocturnal darkness is blackest. And just before the appearance of the Sun of Righteousness, the penitent's distress is frequently the deepest. I promise myself, the hour is at hand, which will "put off your sackcloth, and gird you with gladness."

Another favourable presage is, that you take the direct and certain way to obtain substantial comfort. The righteousness of our Lord Jesus Christ, after which you inquire, about which you are solicitous, is a never-failing spring of consolation: because it acquits from all sin; secures from all condemnation; and renders the believer unblameable and unreprouable in

How the righteousness of the Redeemer becomes ours.

the sight of God. Therefore says the Holy Ghost, "His name is as ointment poured forth;"* even that divinely precious name,—by which he has been celebrated in the preceding epistles; by which he is distinguished in the scripture of truth; by which, I hope, he will be more and more revealed in my Theron's mind,—The Lord our Righteousness. This discovery of him under the most amiable and glorious capacity, will indeed be like breaking open a vial of the richest unguents; which not only fill the room, and regale the sense, with their delightful fragrance; but refresh the spirits, and rejoice the very heart.—Might my writing, or my discourse, be as the alabaster-box to contain, to convey, and present these reviving odours; how highly should I think myself honoured, and how signally my endeavours blessed!

You ask, "How this righteousness of the divine Redeemer becomes ours?—It is a question which I receive with the utmost pleasure; and, with equal pleasure, shall attempt an answer. Or rather, as the Spirit of our God prompted the first, may the same unerring guide suggest the last!—This he has abundantly done by his prophets and apostles; so that I need only have recourse to their writings, and collect some of the hints, which lie treasured up in those storehouses of wisdom.

There we are often told of union with Christ; believers are said to be in Christ,† and to be one with Christ.‡—What is still higher, and implies a greater degree of nearness, they are "members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones."§—And, which denotes the most intimate connexion imaginable, "They are joined to the Lord Jesus, are one spirit"|| with him!—As these expressions appear dark, and their sense lies deep, it has pleased our all-condescending Instructor, to illustrate them, by a variety of significant types, and lively similitudes. This remark very opportunely re-

* Cant. i. 3.

† Col. i. 2.

‡ Heb. ii. 11.

§ Eph. v. 10.

|| 1 Cor. vi. 17.

minds me of an engagement, which, some time ago, I undertook to execute, but have hitherto omitted;— to make it evident, that the blessed doctrine, for which we have been pleading, is deducible from several scripture images. A short descant upon some of the principal, will, I hope, at once discharge my former obligation, and satisfy your present inquiry.

This was shadowed forth by the costly, odoriferous, flowing unguents, poured upon Aaron's head; "which ran down upon his beard, and descended to the skirts of his clothing."* So, the merits of our great High Priest are derived down to all the faithful; even those of the meanest station in life, and the lowest attainments in religion.

Was it not typified by that instructive vision which the prophet Zechariah saw? "I have looked, and behold! a candlestick all of gold, with a bowl upon the top of it, and his seven lamps thereon, and seven pipes to the seven lamps, which were upon the top thereof; and two olive trees by it, one upon the right side of the bowl, and the other upon the left side thereof; which, through the golden pipes, empty the oil out of themselves.† The bowl and the lamps were a proper emblem of believers; who are, by nature, dry vessels, and destitute of all good; yet should shine as lights, in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation.—The olive trees, arrayed in verdure, and abounding with sap; always emptying themselves, yet ever full; are a very just representation of Christ, of his unchangeable love, and his inexhaustible grace.—

* Psa. cxxxiii. 2. What we render skirts is, in the original, *בִּי מְדוּתָי* the mouth; or, as the word is translated (Job xxx. 18.) the collar of his garments. It is hardly supposable, that the consecrated oil flowed down to the very bottom of the sacerdotal vestments. But it might probably reach the upper hem, or the opening round the neck; what the Greeks call *περιβραχχιλιον*. This sense will sufficiently preserve the gradation; the head—the beard—the clothes: which seem to denote Christ, his more advanced saints, and believers of a lower class.

† Zech. iv. 2, 3, 13.

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The golden pipes, through which the olive branches transmit the oil, seem to be figurative of faith, in its various and repeated actings. By these channels of conveyance, the unspeakable benefits of a Redeemer are communicated to our souls, and replenish those empty basons.

Another type the apostle mentions: "The first Adam," he says, "was a figure of him that was to come."* So eminent a figure, and corresponding in so many instances, that he styles our Lord Jesus "the last Adam."† And why? Because, like the first, he was a covenant head to his people, and transacted in our stead. Insomuch that what he did, and what he suffered, both are placed to their account. Is Adam's sin imputed to all his natural offspring? So is Christ's righteousness to all his spiritual seed.—The consequences of both render the doctrine more intelligible, and the truth more undeniable. All men are judged, condemned, dead;‡ doomed inevitably to the death of the body, and justly liable to the death of the soul, on the score of Adam's transgression. All believers are acquitted, justified, saved;§ saved from the first death, and made heirs of the resurrection; saved from the second death, and entitled to life eternal, by virtue of Christ's obedience.

This union with Christ, was not only prefigured by types, but is displayed by a variety of similitudes, taken from the most familiar occurrences of life: by which it appears to be our divine Master's will, that we should live under the habitual belief of this momentous truth, and in the constant enjoyment of this distinguished privilege.—You cannot visit a friend, or view your children; you cannot enter a garden, discourse with your spouse, or contemplate your own body, without a representation and a remembrancer of this precious blessing.

Christ says to his disciples, "Henceforth I call you

* Rom. v. 13.

† Rom. v. 15, 16.

‡ 1 Cor. xv. 15, 16.

§ Rom. v. 19, 21.

exhibited in a variety of scriptures.

not servants, but friends.”* Friends are a second self.† St. Paul, speaking of Onesimus, uses this remarkable phrase, “Receive him as myself;” and, which is still more emphatical, “Receive him that is mine own bowels.”† Is not Christ’s friendship of the most tender and exalted kind? Doubtless it must be equal, doubtless it must be superior, infinitely superior to Jonathan’s:—Jonathan loved David as his own soul. But Christ loved sinners with a love stronger than death. They were dearer to him than his own inestimable life.—Jonathan exposed himself to imminent danger, in vindicating David’s conduct. Jesus surrendered himself to certain death, in making reconciliation for our offences.—Jonathan intercedes once and again with his father on David’s behalf. Christ ever liveth, to plead his blood, and make intercession for transgressors.—“Jonathan stripped himself of the robe that was upon him, and gave it to David, and his garment, even to his sword, and his bow, and his girdle.”§ Our Redeemer, without stripping himself, hath clothed us (such is the prerogative of a divine person!) with the robe of his righteousness, and with the garment of his salvation. He has consigned over to us all the merit of his holy life and propitiatory death.

Christ stands related to his people, not as a friend only, but as a parent. He is called by a prophet, The Everlasting Father;|| and we are said by an apostle, to be his children.¶—Children look upon themselves, as interested in the wealth of their parents. They expect, and not without reasonable ground, to reap benefit from it, while the parents live; and to become possessors of it when they die. Accordingly the father says in the gospel, “Son, all that I have is thine.”**—Since the high and holy Emmannel vouch-

* John xv. 15.

† Horace calls Virgil, “animæ dimidium meæ.”

‡ Philem. 12, 17.

§ 1 Sam. xviii. 4.

|| Isa. vi. 9.

¶ Heb. ii. 13.

** Luke xv. 31.

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safes to be our Father, can we suppose him less generous than an earthly parent? or can we imagine that his children shall have less to hope, than the heirs of an earthly progenitor? May we not, ought we not to regard all his communicable goods, all the benefits resulting from his meritorious sufferings and perfect obedience, as our portion?—Especially, since he is the testator also;* has bequeathed them to us by will; and, having submitted to death, they become legally ours.

“ I am the Vine,” says our Lord, “ ye are the branches.”† They who believe, are ingrafted into Christ. Take notice of a cyon. What are the consequences of its ingrafture? It is embodied with the substance of the tree, and partakes of its fatness. The sap, imbibed by the root, circulates into it; fills it with buds, decks it with blossoms, and loads it with fruit.—If then we are one with Christ, as much as the branch is one with the stock, it must follow, even upon the principles of common experience, that his wisdom is ours, to enlighten us; his righteousness is ours, to justify us; his Spirit is ours, to sanctify us; his redemption is ours, to make us completely and eternally happy.

Christ is united to his people by a tie closer and dearer than the parental. They are not only his children, but his spouse. He is often called their bridegroom, and is not ashamed to avow the tender engagement: “ I will betroth thee to me for ever. Yea, I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in loving-kindness, and in mercies. I will even betroth thee unto me in faithfulness.”‡ The condescending God multiplies, diversifies, accumulates his words; and this with admirable propriety, as well as surpassing goodness. The honour is so high, and the favour so great, we should hardly know how to believe it, and hardly venture to apply it. Lest, therefore, by a single expression it should not be

* Heb. ix. 17.

† John xv. 5.

‡ Hos. ii. 19, 20.

exhibited in a variety of scriptures.

sufficiently established, it stands ratified by repeated asseverations, and with all the energy of language; so that, be the grace ever so astonishing, we are assured, the fact is equally certain; he that is our Maker, is also our Husband.*

Let us consider what follows upon such an union. We may take, for an example, the case of Boaz and Ruth. Soon as their nuptials were solemnized, she that was poor became rich; from a gleaner in the field, she commenced mistress of the harvest; and from abiding by the maidens, had a seat at the master's table.—And if we are united to Christ by a marriage contract, the same effects will take place. We that were poor, are rich in him; we who had nothing, possess all things in Christ; we that dwell in dust, are made to sit together with our divine Husband in heavenly places.†

If you choose some modern exemplification, what can be more pertinent than the remarkable instance of your neighbour Arietta? She was lately left a widow, by the dissolute and extravagant Bellario; her circumstances miserably embarrassed, and the little estate deeply mortgaged; her friends looked shy, and her creditors became clamorous; scarce a day passed, but it made some new discovery of debts contracted by the deceased; so that the affairs of the survivor appeared with a more melancholy aspect, and in a less retrievable condition.—But, having won, first the compassion, then the affection, of the wealthy and illustrious Philander; how happily is the face of things altered! All her debts devolve upon him, and all his dignity is derived to her.‡ He stands responsible for whatever she owes; and she is a sharer in whatever he possesses. Though little less than ruined by her late hus-

* Isa. liv. 5.

† Eph. ii. 6.

‡ Ubi tu Caius, ibi ego Caia, was the Roman maxim. Agreeably to this rule, which has obtained among all civilized nations, the scripture calls the church by the name of her divine husband. Compare Jer. xxii. 5, 6. with Jer. xxxiii. 15, 16.

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band, she is more than restored by her present; and has reason to rejoice in his affluence, and to glory in his honours.—Have we not also reason to rejoice in our heavenly Bridegroom? since a far more glorious exchange subsists between him and his mystical spouse. He has borne the curse, that we may inherit the blessing. Sin was charged on him, that righteousness might be imputed to us. In a word, he has sustained all our miseries, that he might impart to us all his benefits.—Has the law any demand?* It must go to him for satisfaction. Have we any wants? We may look to him for supply; to him, Theron, “in whom it has pleased the Father, that all fulness should dwell.”†

If any thing can express an union more intimate and inseparable than the conjugal, it is that of the members with the head. And this image is used by the Holy Ghost, to shadow forth the connexion between Christ and the faithful. He is the “head over all things,” with respect to rule and supremacy; but a head of union and influence, with respect “to the church.”‡—The head and the members constitute one natural body; Christ and his church compose one mystical body. What kindness is done, what injury is offered to the members, the head regards them as done to itself. Accordingly, Christ says to the outrageous Saul, who made havock of the church, “Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?”§ He declares, concerning those indigent christians, to whose necessities we administer relief; “Inasmuch as ye have done it unto them, ye have done it unto me.”||—The animal spirits formed in the head, are formed for the benefit of the whole body, and designed for the use of all the members. So the righteousness wrought by Jesus

* The demands of the laws are, perfect obedience: “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart.”—To which, in case of disobedience, is superadded condign punishment: Cursed “is he that continueth not in all things.”

† Col. i. 19.

‡ Acts ix. 4.

§ Eph. i. 22.

|| Matt. xxv. 40.

exhibited in a variety of scriptures.

Christ, is wrought out for the whole mystical body, and intended for the advantage of all his people, to be the cause of their justification, and the purchase of their salvation.

Being then so nearly related, so closely united to the blessed Jesus, it is no wonder that believers are now loved with the same fatherly love, and will hereafter be partakers of the same heavenly glory. What might we not expect from the divine Redeemer, if he vouchsafed to acknowledge but one of those endearing names? Since he has engaged himself to us by all the ties of affinity and affection; may we not promise ourselves, and with the assurance of hope, every good thing; “even all the fulness of God”* our Saviour?—Does not each of these tender relations, subsisting between Christ and his saints, imply an entire property in one another, and a mutual participation of all that belongs to either?—“My beloved is mine, and I am his,”—I dare not say, is the posey of the mystical ring,—but it is the undoubted effect of this divine union.

How pleasing, yet how amazing the thought! Shall we, who say to corruption, “Thou art my father;” and to the worm, “Thou art my mother and my sister;”† shall we be permitted to say, concerning the Head of all principality and power, “We are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones?”‡—What a mercy might we esteem it, not to be confounded before a Majesty so exalted and sublime!—What an honour, to be admitted into his family, and numbered amongst the meanest of his servants! But to be his adopted children; to be his espoused bride; to be the members of his sacred body;—to have him for our everlasting Father; him for the Bridegroom of our souls, him for our heavenly Head; who is the Maker of all worlds, and the Sovereign of all creatures! What words can duly celebrate, what heart can sufficiently admire, the condescension and the love of our

* Eph. iii 19.

† Job xvii. 14.

‡ Eph. v. 30.

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adorable Jesus; or who can justly question the fruits of such a fellowship, and the consequences of such an union? Question them! No, the fruits are infallibly sure, as the privilege is inexpressibly great.

Let me once again introduce a great and venerable witness of both these truths. "Laban spake high, when he said, These children are mine, and all these things thou seest are mine." "But how high and glorious is that which may be said of a justified person! All thou hearest of Christ is thine; his life is thine, his death is thine, his obedience, merit, spirit, all is thine."*—Rich and important words! than which nothing can give us a juster or fuller explanation of the apostle's assertion, "We are partakers of Christ."†

When some foreign ladies, of the first quality, paid a visit to Leonidas's queen; the talk turned upon their rich clothes, their costly jewels, and splendid equipages. After they had severally displayed each her own grandeur, they inquired after her majesty's finery; what she had to distinguish her from the vulgar? She replied, "My illustrious husband."‡ What else? "My illustrious husband."—And as often as they repeated the same question, she returned the same answer.—Could this queen speak in such admiring, rejoicing, self-gratulating terms of her royal consort; And shall not vile sinners look upon their Redeemer, —that all-glorious, yet all-condescending bridegroom; who is full of grace and truth, full of merit and righteousness;—shall not they much more look upon him as their honour and their joy; the object of their dependence, and the cause of their boasting?

I should find it difficult to refrain from the farther prosecution of so engaging a topic, did I not propose to wait upon my Theron very speedily. Then I shall have an opportunity of pouring into his bosom all the

* See Dr. Lightfoot's works, vol. II. p. 1077.

† Heb. iii. 14.

‡ The amiable and heroic Panthea expresses herself in much the same manner, concerning her gallant husband Abradates; *Εὐ γὰρ ἐμοῦγε μάλιστα κόσμος ἐστίν.* Xenoph. Cyropæd. lib. VI.

exhibited in a variety of scriptures.

fulness of my heart, with regard to this delightful subject.—In the mean time, let me exhort my dear friend to be of good comfort. “Heaviness may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning.”* This sorrow of which you complain, may be the seed of spiritual and eternal consolation.

While I am writing, there appears full in my view, one of the finest rainbows I ever beheld. “It compasseth the heavens with a glorious circle;” so glorious, that it is no disparagement of the almighty Creator, to say, “the hands of the Most High have bended it.”† —On what foundation, would I ask, is that stately and beautiful arch raised? from what source do all its radiant and lovely colours spring? It is raised on a gloomy assemblage of vapours; and all its rich tinctures spring from a lowring cloud.—Thus does the blessed God, by a conviction of guilt and a sense of ruin, spread faith, paint holiness, and diffuse gladness. May all these, ere long, arise in my Theron’s breast; and each be—bright, as that resplendent bow, —lasting, as the sun that creates it!

In the mean time, it is the ardent wish of my soul, and shall be my frequent prayer to God, “That both our hearts may be comforted, being knit together in love, unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding,”‡ in this great mystery of godliness.—What vigour of expression, what exuberance of ideas, and above all, what distinguished privileges are here!—assurance,—full assurance,—riches of the full assurance,—all riches of the full assurance of understanding,—in reference to our union with Christ, and its unutterably precious effects?—Can the orator express more? can the sinner desire more? can the saint, I had almost said, can the archangel enjoy more?—May this be the portion of my dear Theron, and of

His ever faithful

ASPASIO.

* Psa. xxx. 5.

† Eccus. xliii. 12.

‡ Col. ii. 1.

THERON AND ASPASIO :

OR, A

SERIES OF DIALOGUES.



DIALOGUE XV.

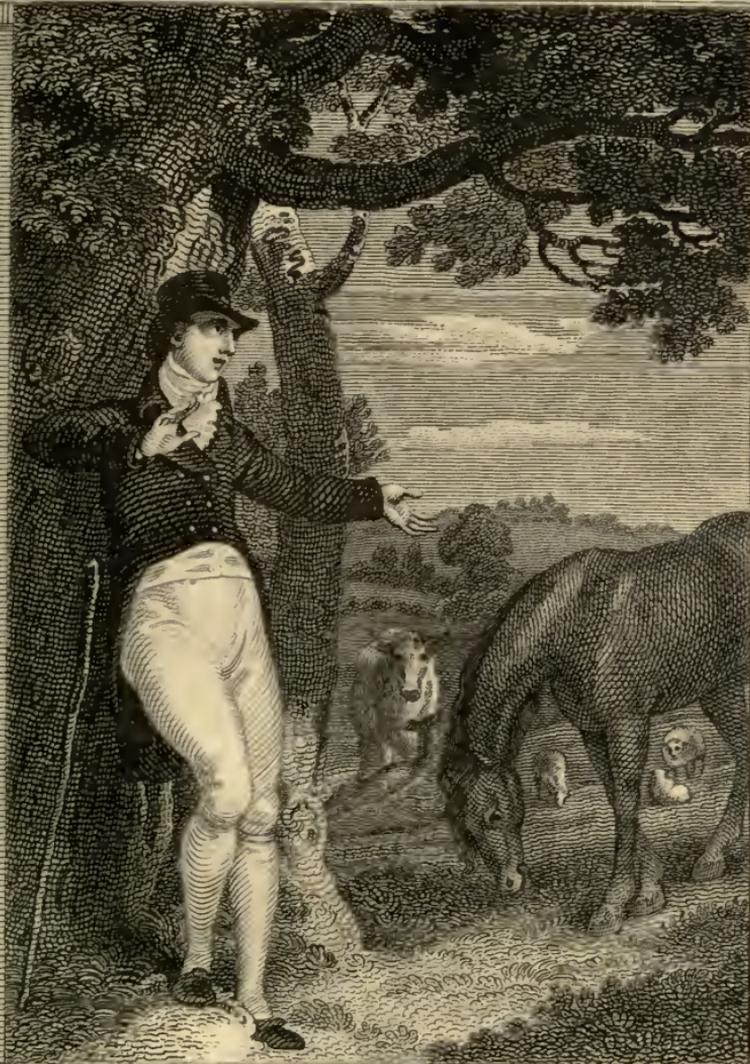
ASPASIO had taken leave of his friend Camillus, and was come to revisit Theron; whose thoughts seemed to be in a state of much fluctuation, and no small anxiety; hoping, that some proper conversation on the grace and privileges of the everlasting gospel, might compose and comfort his mind; might, while his heart was softened by humbling convictions, fix the stamp of genuine christianity; and deliver his whole soul into the mould* of evangelical religion.

When sorrow wounds the breast, as ploughs the glebe,
And hearts obdurate feel her soft'ning show'r,
Her seed celestial then glad wisdom sows;
Her golden harvests triumph in the soil.†

He arrived pretty late in the evening; and, being somewhat weary with his journey, soon withdrew to his repose.—The next morning, as Theron walked abroad, to taste the cool delights of the dawn; he was agreeably surprised by meeting Aspasio.

* “Deliver into the mould.”—This is the literal translation, and exact sense, of St. Paul's phrase, *Εἰς ὃν παρεδόθη τὸν διδασκῆς*, Rom. vi. 17.—Which, as it contains a beautiful allusion, conveys also a very instructive admonition: intimating, that our minds, all pliant and ductile, should be conformed to the refined precepts of the gospel, as liquid metals take the figure of some elegant mould, into which they are cast.

† Night Thoughts.



TEERON & SPASIO.
Dialogue the Fifteenth.



Conversation recommenced.

Ther. So soon awake, my worthy friend! and after so much fatigue on the preceding day!—I had not the least expectation of your company, till breakfast. Then indeed I promise myself a double regale;—the refreshments exhibited on the table; and those “whole-some words of our Lord Jesus Christ,”* which, more precious than manna, drop—

Asp. How, Theron!—Have you also learned those soothing arts, which polish the speech, to deprave our sentiments? Could I have suspected the enchanting wiles of flattery, from my sincere, my tried, my bosom friend?

Ther. Your friend is still sincere, and his words are very remote from flattery.—How welcome to the wind-bound mariner, weary with expectation, and sick with disappointments, is the visit of a propitious gale! How welcome to the fields, parched with drought, and gasping for moisture, are copious showers of rain! How acceptable to the Israelites, travelling through the inhospitable desert, and pining away for want of the fruits of the earth, was the miraculous supply of the heavenly bread!—Yet neither propitious gales to the wind-bound mariner, nor copious showers to the thirsty soil, nor heavenly bread to the famished Israelites, could be more welcome, than your late conversation, and later correspondence, to my anxious soul.

Asp. Why, I thought you looked upon my notions as chimerical. Is Theron also become credulous? Like one of us weak-headed believers,—has he quitted the strong holds of reason? is he vanquished by the sling-stone of faith? or can he submit to this strange method of salvation, by embracing the righteousness, and relying on the obedience of another?

Ther. I find my reason was a feeble guide, or I myself not faithful to its genuine dictates. I was blind with prejudice; I was intoxicated with pride; a vain conceit of my moral powers betrayed me, as I fear it

* 1 Tim. vi. 3.

Theron explicitly declares his own conviction

has betrayed many, into a contempt of the evangelical righteousness.—I held what I thought an honour to human nature. I now retract my opinion. I now perceive, that, as my natural light could not discover the way, neither can my personal obedience put me in possession of life and salvation. My true glory, and real happiness, I would henceforth derive from the blessed Jesus.—No more banter, Aspasio—have done;—I am serious, and very much in earnest; so much in earnest, that if all my acquaintance of the Pharisaical turn, or if all my brothers of the smile, should rally me on the subject, I would frankly acknowledge my error, and as freely sign my recantation.

Asp. My dear Theron, I applaud your resolution. You have no more cause to be ashamed of such a practice, than Philip had occasion to be ashamed of the imperfection in his limbs; when, being observed to go lame, with a wound received in battle, he had this consolation suggested by one of his courtiers; “Never blush, my royal sir, for a defect which puts you in mind of your valour, every step you take.”—To sacrifice our prejudices in the search of truth, is no less honourable than to be marked with a scar in the defence of our country.

I beg pardon for my pleasantry. Since you are so very serious, a gay air was quite unseasonable. You cannot often complain, that I am guilty of this fault. Nor can you easily imagine the satisfaction I shall enjoy, if either my letters or my discourse have administered any advantage to my friend. I shall note it down among the distinguished blessings of my life; and have an additional obligation to love the beneficent Author of all good.

But as I cannot be the furtherer of your happiness without the greatest delight, so I cannot be a witness of your solicitude without a painful regret. You must therefore permit me to ask the cause of that unusual vehemence which I observe in your speech, and of that deep concern which I read in your countenance.

of the necessity and excellency of the Redeemer's righteousness.

Ther. I have been considering very attentively, what is the present state, and what is likely to be the final condition of my soul.

—————My hopes and fears
Start up alarm'd; and o'er life's narrow verge
Look down—on what? A fathomless abyss,
A vast eternity!

My sins at the same time, like an armed host, are set in dreadful array, and surround me on every side.—Justice, like an injured and incensed foe, unsheaths the sword, and makes a loud demand for vengeance.—No righteousness of my own presents itself, to which I may fly for refuge.—The method of salvation, in which I formerly confided, is a bridge broken down; and leaves me, without any possibility of escape, abandoned to the approaching enemy.

To a person in such deplorable circumstances, how reviving, how delightful is the very thought of being interested in the great Redeemer's righteousness! I don't wonder now at a saying of Luther's, which I have sometimes exploded, as strangely extravagant: "That, upon the discovery of this glorious righteousness, the gates of paradise seemed to fly open before him, and the dawn of heaven was all in view."

Talking in this manner, they came to an elevated terrace: which, about an hour before, had been shaved by the scythe, and emitted all the freshness of new-mown herbage.—On one side, a fine champaign country stretched its wide dimensions.—On the other, a flower-garden exhibited the last ornaments of the year. Here you might still see the tufted vermilion, and the full-blown ivory, glittering through spangles of liquid crystal.—There you might trace the footsteps of the early cattle, by many a recent print on the dewy lawn.—On the walls and espaliers, autumn had spread her stores; and was beginning to beautify their rinds with many a ruddy streak, or to breathe over their glossy skins her delicate and inimitable bloom.

Asp. See, said Aspasio, the wisdom and benignity,

Aspasio, to entertain and comfort his friend,

which, in amiable and inseparable conjunction, display themselves through the whole economy of the universe: "God has made every thing beautiful in his time;"* every thing serviceable in its place. A little while ago, the flowery meads delighted our eyes, and the melodious birds charmed our ears; now the tasteful fruits are preparing their dainties, and presenting us with a collation, to regale our palate.—The whole earth, and all the seasons, are rich with our Creator's goodness. Yea, the whole earth, and all that replenishes it, all that surrounds it, are full of his presence. He it is, who

Warms in the sun, refreshes in the breeze,
Glow's in the stars, and blossoms in the trees:
Lives through all life, extends through all extent,
Spreads undivided, operates unspent.†

An habitual belief of this truth, gives nature her loveliest aspect, and lends her the most consummate power to please. The breath of violets, and the blush of roses; the music of the woods, and the meanders of the stream; the aspiring hill, the extended plain, and all the decorations of the landscape; then appear in their highest attractives; then touch the soul with the most refined satisfaction: when God is seen,—when God is heard,—and God enjoyed in all.—Is Theron lost in thought, and deprived of speech? Is he alone silent, while all things speak their Maker's praise?—Does faith throw a shade over the works of creation? Does it not heighten their beauties, and enliven their graces?—The religious is the only true philosopher; and the pleasures of imagination never acquire their proper relish, till they are ripened by the exercise of devotion. With this view then, since my friend forbears, let me attempt to speak; not to increase his knowledge, but to cherish faith, and cultivate devotion in us both.

The spacious canopy‡ over our heads, is painted

* Eccl. iii. 11.

† Pope's Eth. Epist.

‡ What Aspasio calls the canopy, Isaiah describes by כַּדָּק. Which we translate as a curtain; but the exact signification is, "Sicut tenue,

enlarges upon the bounty of the Creator.

with blue; and the ample carpet under our feet, is tinged with green. These colours, by their soft and cheering qualities, yield a perpetual refreshment to the eye.* Whereas, had the face of nature glittered with white, or glowed with scarlet; such ardent and dazzling hues would, instead of exhilarating, have fatigued the sight.—Besides, as the several brighter colours are interspersed, and form the pictures in this magnificent piece; the green and the blue constitute an admirable ground, which shews them all, in their highest lustre, and to the utmost advantage.†

Had the air been considerably grosser, it would have dimmed the rays of the sun, and darkened the cheerful day; our lungs had been clogged in their vital functions; men had been suffocated, without the strangling noose; or drowned, without the overwhelming flood.—Was it several degrees more subtile, birds would not be able to wing their way through the firmament; nor could the clouds be sustained in so attenuated an atmosphere. It would elude the organs of respiration; we should gasp for breath, with as much difficulty, and with as little success, as fishes out of their native element.

vel tenuissimum quid;” Like some finely attenuated expanse. Not like the curtains or coverings of the tabernacle, which were goats’ hair and badgers’ skins, shaggy and coarse; but like some very fine membrane, smooth and elegant, nicely polished and inimitably delicate. Than which comparison nothing can more perfectly correspond with the aspect of the sky, Isa. xl. 22.

* —————Gay green,
Thou smiling nature’s universal robe!
United light and shade! where the sight dwells,
With growing strength, and ever-new delight.

Thomson’s Spring.

† If the reader has patience to go through the following essay, he will find it, in the issue, not altogether foreign to the main subject.—If he pleases to consider it, as a kind of practical comment, on that lovely celebration of providential goodness, “His tender mercies are over all his works:”—this may possibly alleviate the toil of perusing, and reconcile him to the length of the descant.

Aspasio, to entertain and comfort his friend,

The ground also is wrought into the most proper temperature. Was it of firmer consistence, it would be impenetrable to the plough, and unmanageable by the spade.—Was it of a laxer composition, it would be incapable of supporting its own furniture. The light mould would be swept away by the whirling winds; or the oozy glebe soaked into sloughs by the descending rains.—Because every situation suits not every plant; but that which is a nurse to one, often proves a step-mother to others; therefore the qualities of the earth are so abundantly diversified, as properly to accommodate every species of vegetation. We have a variety of intermediate soils, from the loose disjointed sand, to the stiff cohesive clay; from the rough projections of the craggy cliff, to the softly-swelling bed of the smooth parterre.

The sea carries equal evidences of a most wise and gracious ordination.—Was it larger, we should want land for the purposes of pasturage, and the operations of husbandry. We should be destitute of sufficient room for mines and forests; our subterranean warehouses, and our aerial timber-yards.—Was it smaller, it would not be capable of recruiting the sky with a proper quantity of vaprous exhalations, nor of supplying the earth with the necessary quota of fructifying showers.

Do we not discern very apparent strokes of skill, and the most pregnant proofs of goodness, in each individual object; in the various tenants of the globe, and the several appurtenances of this great dwelling?—It is needless to expatiate upon the more eminent and conspicuous beauties; all that shines in the heavens, and all that smiles on the earth. These speak to every ear, these shew to every eye, the adorable munificence of their Maker.—It is needless to launch into the praises of the valleys, delicately clothed with herbage; or the fields richly replenished with corn. Even the ragged rocks, which frown over the flood; the caverned quarries, which yawn amidst the land; together with the mountains, those shapeless and enor-

enlarges upon the bounty of the Creator.

mous protuberances, which seem to load the ground, and encumber the skies; even those contribute their share, to increase the general pleasure, and augment the general usefulness. They variegate the prospect; raise an agreeable horror in the beholder; and inspire his breast with a religious awe. They add new charms to the wide level of our plains; and shelter, like a screen, the warm lap of our vales.

We are delighted with the solemn gloom, and magnificent aspect of the forest. One who saw the cedars of Lebanon, was transported with admiration at their ample trunks, and towering heads, their diffusive spread, and verdant grandeur. Compared with which, the stately elm is but a reed; and the branching oak a mere shrub.—Was our sight qualified for the search, we should discover a symmetry and a dignity, altogether as perfect, and far more wonderful, in those groves of moss* which adhere to the rude stone. We should contemplate, with greater surprise, if not with greater rapture, those diminutive plantations, which strike their hasty roots in the mouldy confection, or wave their curious umbrage over the perished pickle.†

Who is not charmed with the vine, and its generous warming juices; with the melon, and its delicious cooling pulp? Yet, were all our trees to produce

* See, for a proof of this remark, the explanation of the tenth plate, in that very curious, very entertaining, and no less instructive piece, entitled, *Micrographia Restaurata*.—Where our author compares the size of this little vegetable, with the dimensions of those vast trees, which grow in the vigorous climates of Guinea and Brazil. The trunks of which are, according to the report of travellers, twenty feet in diameter. Whereas, the body of this minute plant, measures no more than the sixtieth part of an inch. So that, upon a calculation, the thickness of the former exceeds that of the latter, 2,985,984 millions of times.—So prodigiously various are the works of the Creator.

† That whitish kind of down, which slags the putrefying pickle, which incrusts the surface of some corrupted liquor, and constitutes what we call mouldiness, is really a cluster of little plants. Each has a root and a stalk: each spreads in branches, and produces seed in abundance.

*Radicesquæ suas habet, exilemque coronam,
Frondesque, fructumque gerit, velut ardua quercus,*

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fruits of such exalted qualities, or such an agreeable relish, what would become of the birds? How small a scantling of such choice delicacies would voracious man resign to their enjoyment?—That provision may be made for the meanest vagrant of the air, as well as for the most renowned sovereign of a nation; there is, in all places, a large growth of shrubs, covered annually with a harvest of coarse and hard berries: so coarse in their taste, that they are unworthy of the acceptance of man; so hardy in their make, that they endure the extremest severities of the weather, and furnish the feathered tribe with a standing repast, amidst all the desolations of winter.

The fir, with her silver bark, and shapely cone; the beech,* with her quivering leaves and embowering shade, are stately decorations of our rural seats. But, if there were no entangling thickets, no prickly thorns, where would the farmer procure fences so closely wattled, or so strongly armed?† How could he guard the scene of his labours, or secure his vegetable wealth, from the flocks and the herds; those roving plunderers, which accede to no treaty, but that of

* The fir, the beech, and such like trees, are called in Hebrew, גחלילי Isa. vii. 19. Which word is rendered, but I think very improperly, bushes. It rather signifies the grand and most admired plants. It is intended as a contrast to the coarse and despicable thorns, mentioned in the preceding clause. And both taken together express all sorts of trees, from the towering cedar to the grovelling shrub.

† Something to this purpose is hinted in the prophecy of Isaiah, by יראת שמיר רשיח “terriculamentum sentium et veprium;” the terror of thorns and briars; meaning those sharp and ragged mounds, with which vineyards, corn-fields, and other cultivated spots, were usually inclosed; which deterred the adventurous cattle from forcing, or attempting to force a passage.—The words are somewhat obscure, and have been greatly misunderstood. But thus interpreted, they afford an easy sense, and perfectly coincide with the context: implying, “that place, formerly fenced out with abundance of care, should lie open, and exposed to every wandering foot: that tillage should be discontinued; and the whole country degenerated into a confused, disorderly waste, without either the distributions of property or the improvements of industry.” Isa. vii. 25. Vide Vitring. in Loc.

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forcible restraint; submit to no laws, but those of the coercive kind?

Most people are fond of the purslain's fleshy leaves, and the ramified fatness of the brocoli; the potato's mealy orbs, and the lentile's succulent pods. We spare no toil, we grudge no expence, to have them flourishing in our gardens, and served up at our tables.—But there are innumerable herbs, which pass under the contemptible character of weeds; and yet are altogether as desirable to many classes of creatures, as these culinary gifts to mankind. Who shall be at the pains to plant, to water, to cultivate, such despicable productions? Man would rather extirpate, than propagate, these incumbrances of his acres. Therefore Providence vouchsafes to be their gardener. Providence has wrought off their seeds into such a lightness of substance, that they are carried abroad with the undulations of the air; or, if too heavy to be wafted by the breeze, they are fastened to the wings of down, which facilitate their flight, or else, are inclosed in a springy case, which forcibly bursting, shoots and spreads them on every side.—By some means the reproducing principle is disseminated, the universal granary is filled, and the universal board furnished. The buzzing insect, and the creeping worm, have each his bill of fare. Each enjoys a never-failing treat, equivalent to our finest venison, or to the “fat of kidneys of wheat.”*

As the seeds of some plants are most artfully scattered abroad, when ripe; the seeds of others are most carefully guarded, till they come to maturity;

* The fat of kidneys of wheat, Deut. xxxii. 14. A sentence rich with elegance! such as would have shone in Pindar, or been admired by Longinus. Yet, I believe, its principal beauty consists in an allusion to a remarkable Jewish rite. In every sacrifice, the fat of the kidneys was, as the most delicious part of the victim, set apart for God, and consumed on his altar. Here even the common people were treated like the Deity. They lay under no restraint, either from the divine prohibition, or the scarcity of the grain; but were copiously supplied, and freely regaled themselves with the choicest finest part of this first and best of vegetables.

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and, by both contrivances, every species is not barely preserved, but in a manner eternized.—Some are lodged in the centre of a large pulp; which is, at once, their defence and their nourishment. This we find exemplified in the tasteful apple, and the juicy pear.—Some, besides the surrounding pulp, are inclosed in a thick shell, hard and impenetrable as stone. We cannot pluck and eat one of these downy peaches, or incrimsoned nectarines, which so beautifully emboss the wall, without finding a proof of this precaution.—Cast your eye upon the walnuts which stud the branches of that spreading tree. Before these are gathered, the increase of the cold, and the emptiness of the gardens, will sharpen the appetite of the birds. To secure the fine kernel from the depredations of their busy assailing bills, it is fortified with a strong inclosure of wood, and with the addition of a disgusting bitter rind.

If grass was as scarce as the Guernsey-lily, or as difficultly raised as the delicate tuberoses, how certainly and how speedily must many millions of quadrupeds perish with famine! Since all the cattle owe their chief subsistence to this vegetable, by a singular beneficence in the divine economy, it waiteth not, like the corn-field and the garden-bed, for the annual labours of man.* When once sown, though ever so frequently cropped, it revives with the returning season, and flourishes in a kind of perennial verdure. It covers our meadows, diffuses itself over the plains, springs up in every glade of the forest, and spreads a sideboard in the most sequestered nook.

Since the nutriment of vegetables themselves lies hid under the soil, or floats up and down in the air; beneath, they plunge their roots into the ground,† and disperse every way their fibrous suckers, to explore the latent and attract the proper nourishment; above, they expand a multitude of leaves,† which, like so

* Mic. v. 7.

†† Job most beautifully alludes to these two sources of vegetable fertility: "My root was spread out by the waters, and the dew lay all night upon my branches." Job xxix. 19.

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many open mouths, catch the rains as they fall; imbibe the dews as they distil; and transmit them, through their nice orifices, to the heart of the plant, or the lobes of the fruit.

I have touched upon the insensible creation; and pointed out the care of a condescending Providence, exercised over these lowest formations of nature.—The animal world, Theron, falls to your share. It is yours to descant upon those higher orders of existence; and shew us the goodness of God, extending its indulgent regards to them and their interests, as tenderly, as officiously, as a hen spreadeth her wings over her infant brood.*

Ther. The subject is in good hands. Let part the second be of the same strain with part the first, and there will be no occasion to wish for a new speaker. As to myself, I have very little inclination to talk. But I have an ear open and attentive to your discourse.

Asp. You put me in mind of the philosopher, who presumed to read a lecture on the art of war, in the presence of Hannibal. But his impertinence was voluntary, mine is constrained.—Since you enjoin me this office, let us pass from the vegetable to the animal world. Here we shall find no tribe, no individual neglected. The superior classes want no demonstration of their excellent accomplishments. At the first glimpse, they challenge our approbation, they command our applause. Even the more ignoble forms of animated existence are most wisely circumstanced, and most liberally accommodated.

They all generate in that particular season, which is sure to supply them with a stock of provision, sufficient both for themselves, and their increasing families.—The sheep yean, when there is a profusion of nutrimental herbage on the soil, to fill their udders,

* This seems to be the image used by the psalmist, Psa. cxlv. 9. And a most amiable image, as well as a most picturesque representation, it is.

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and create milk for their lambs.—The birds lay their eggs, and hatch their young, when myriads of newborn, tender insects swarm on every side: so that the caterer, whether it be male or female parent, needs only to alight to the ground, or make a little excursion into the air, and they find a feast ready dressed, and all at free cost, for the claimant mouths at home.

Their love to their offspring, while they continue in a helpless state, is invincibly strong. Whereas the very moment they are able to shift for themselves; when the parental affection would be attended with much solicitude, and productive of no advantage; it vanishes, as though it had never been. The hen which marches at the head of her little brood, would fly in the eyes of a mastiff, or even encounter a lion in their defence. Yet, within a few weeks, she abandons her chickens to the wide world, and not so much as knows them any more.

If the God of Israel inspired Bezaleel and Aholiab with wisdom, and understanding, and knowledge in all manner of-workmanship;”* the God of nature has instructed the wild and warbling inhabitants of the bough.—The skill, with which they erect their houses, and adjust their apartments, is inimitable. The caution, with which they secrete their abodes from the searching eye, or intruding foot, is admirable. No general, though fruitful in expedients, could plan a more artful concealment. No architect, with his rule and line, could build so commodious a lodgment.—Give the most celebrated artificer the same materials, which these weak and inexperienced creatures use; let a Jones or a De Moivre, have only some rude straws or ugly sticks; a few bits of dirt, or scraps of hair; a sorry lock of wool, or coarse sprig of moss; and what works, fair with delicacy, or fit for service, could they produce?

We extol the commander, who knows how to take

* Exod, xxxi. 3.

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advantage of the ground; who can make the sun and wind fight for him, as well as his troops; and, by every circumstance, embarrasses the forces of the enemy, but expedites the action, and advances the success of his own. Does not this praise belong to our feathery leaders: who pitch their tent, or (if you please) fix their pensile camp, on the dangerous branches that wave aloft in the air, or dance over the eddies of the stream. By which judicious disposition, the vernal gales rock their cradle, and the murmuring waters lull their young; while both concur to terrify the shepherd, and keep the schoolboy at a trembling distance.—Some hide their little household from view, amidst the shelter of entangled furze. Others remove it from reach, in the centre of a thorny thicket. And, by one stratagem or another, they are generally as secure and unmolested in their feeble habitations, as the foxes, which entrench themselves deep in the earth, or as the conies, which retire to the rocks for their citadel.*

If the swan has large sweeping wings, and a copious stock of feathers, to spread over her callow brood; the wren makes up by contrivance, what is deficient in her bulk.—Small as she is, she intends† to bring forth, and will be obliged to nurse up, a very numerous issue. Therefore, with the correctest judgment she designs, and with indefatigable assiduity finishes, a nest proper for her purpose. It is a neat rotund,

* Prov. xxx. 26.

† Aspasio has ventured to say, She intends;—and one is almost tempted to think, from the preparation which the little creature makes, that she had already sat down, and counted the cost, and concerted her scheme. As though she had deliberated with herself:—"I shall lay, not a couple of eggs, but a score. From these I am to produce a house full of young. But how shall I have warmth (unless art supply what nature has denied) sufficient to hatch the embryos, or cherish the infants?" The truth, I believe, is, that in all her seeming foresight, and circumspect behaviour, she acts she knows not what. Only she acts what eternal wisdom knows to be necessary, and what all-condescending goodness prompts her to perform.

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lengthened into an oval, bottomed and vaulted with a regular concave. To preserve it from rain, it has several coatings of moss; to defend it from cold, it has but one window, and only a single door; to render it both elegant and comfortable, it has carpets and hangings of the softest finest down.—By the help of this curious mansion, our little lady becomes the mother of multitudes. The vivifying heat of the body is, during the time of incubation, exceedingly augmented. Her house is like an oven, and greatly assists in hatching her young: which no sooner bursts the shell, than they find themselves screened from the annoyance of the weather; and most agreeably reposed, amidst the ornaments of a palace, and the warmth of a bagnio.

Perhaps we have been accustomed to look upon the insects, as so many rude scraps of creation, and to rank them amongst the refuse of things. Whereas, if we examine them without prejudice, and with a little attention, they will appear some of the most polished pieces of the divine workmanship.—Many of them are decked with a profusion of finery. Their eyes are an assemblage* of microscopes, whose mechanism is inconceivably nice, and finished in the highest perfection. Their dress has all the variety and lustre of colours: it is set with an arrangement of the most brilliant gems, and bordered with fringes richer far than

* The common fly, for instance: who is surrounded with a multitude of dangers, and has neither strength to resist her enemies, nor a place of retreat to secure herself. For which reason she had need to be very vigilant, and always upon her guard. Yet her head is so fixed, that it is incapable of turning, in order to observe what passes, either behind or around her.—Providence therefore, surprisngly wise in its contrivances, and equally bountiful in its gifts, has furnished her, not barely with a retinue, but with more than a legion of eyes. Insomuch, that a single fly is supposed to be mistress of no less than eight thousand: every one of which is lined with a distinct optic nerve.—By means of this costly and amazing apparatus, the little creature sees on every side, with the utmost ease and with instantaneous speed; even without any motion of the eye, or any flexion of the neck.

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the most costly silks. Their wings are the finest expansions imaginable: cambric is mere canvass, and lawn is coarse as sackcloth, compared with those imitable webs. The cases which inclose their wings, glitter with the most glossy varnish; are scooped into ornamental flutings; are studded with radiant spots; or pinked with elegant holes. Not any among them but are equipped with weapons, or endued with dexterity, which qualify them to seize their prey, or escape their foe; to dispatch the business of their respective stations, and enjoy the pleasures of their particular condition.

Now I am in a talking humour, give me leave to celebrate the endowments, and assert the honours of my puny clients; yet not so much to support their credit, as to magnify their all-gracious Creator.—What if the elephant is distinguished by a huge proboscis? His meanest relations of the reptile line are furnished with curious antennæ; remarkable, if not for their enormous magnitude, yet for their ready flexibility, and acute sensation: by which they explore their way, even in the darkest road; they discover and avoid whatever might defile their neat apparel, or endanger their tender lives.

Every one admires that majestic creature the horse; his graceful head, and ample chest; his arching neck, and flowing mane; his cleanly-turned limbs, and finely-adjusted motions.—With extraordinary agility, he flings himself over the ditch; and, with a rapid career, pours himself* through the plain. With unwearied application, he carries his rider from one end of the country to another; and, with undaunted bravery, rushes into the fiercest rage, and amidst the thickest havock of the battle.—Yet the grasshopper springs with a bound altogether as brisk, if not

* Pours himself—This is Jeremiah's beautiful and expressive phrase, כָּסִים שׁוֹמֵם chap: viii. 6. Which Virgil has been ambitious to imitate,

—Ruuntque effusi carcere.

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more impetuous.—The ant, in proportion to its size, is equally nimble, equally strong; and will climb precipices, which the most courageous courser dares not attempt to scale.—If the snail is slower in her motions, she is under no necessity of treading back the ground which she has passed; because her house is a part of her travelling equipage; and whenever she departs, she is still under her own roof; wherever she removes, is always at home.

The eagle, 'tis true, is privileged with pinions that outstrip the wind. Elevated on which, she looks down on all that soars; and sees flying clouds, and straining wings far below: her optic nerve so strong, that it meets and sustains the dazzling beams of noon; her wide-surveying glance so keen, that, from those towering heights, it discerns the smallest fish, which skulks at the bottom of the river.—Yet neither is the poor outcast, the grovelling and gloomy mole, disregarded by divine Providence. Because she is to dig a cell in the earth, and dwell, as it were, in a perpetual dungeon, her paws serve her for a pickaxe and spade. Her eye, or rather her visual speck, is sunk deep into a socket, that it may suffer no injury from her rugged situation; it requires but a very scanty communication of light, that she may have no reason to complain of her darkling abode. I called her subterranean habitation a dungeon; and some people, perhaps, may think it a grave. But I revoke the expression. It yields her all the safety of a fortified castle, and all the delight of a decorated grot.

Even the spider, though abhorred by mankind, is evidently the care of all-sustaining heaven. She is to live upon plunder; to support herself by trepanning the idle, insignificant, sauntering fly. Suitably to such an occupation, she possesses a bag of glutinous moisture. From this she spins a clammy thread, and weaves it into a tenacious net. Expert as any practised sportsman, she always spreads it in the most opportune places. Sensible that her appearance

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would create horror, and deter the prey from approaching the snare, when watching for sport, she retires from sight; but constantly keeps within distance, so as to receive the very first intelligence of what passes in the toils; and be ready to launch, without a moment's delay, upon the struggling captive. And what is very observable, when winter chills the world, and no more insects ramble amidst the air, foreseeing that her labour would be vain, she discontinues her work, and abandons her stand.

I must by no means forget the little monarchy, which inhabits the hive. The bees are to subsist, not as a lawless banditti, but as a regular community. 'Tis theirs to earn a decent livelihood by honest industry; not to glut themselves with carnage, or enrich themselves with rapine. For which reason, they are actuated by an invariable inclination to society. They possess the true notions of domestic economy; and have enacted the wisest laws for political government.—Their indulgent Creator has made them a present of all necessary implements, both for constructing their combs, and for composing their honey. They have each a portable vessel with which they bring home their collected sweets; and they have all the most commodious storehouses, in which they deposit their delicious wares.—Though made for peace, they know how to use the sword. They can take up arms with the utmost resolution and intrepidity, when arms are requisite to guard their wealth, or repel their foes. Without going through a course of botany, they can readily distinguish every plant, which is most likely to yield materials proper for their business. Without serving an apprenticeship in the laboratory, they are complete practitioners in the art of separation and refinement. They are aware, without borrowing the information from an almanac, that the vernal gleams, and summer suns, continue but for a season. Mindful of this admonition,* they

* *Venturæque hyemis memores, æstate laborem
Experiuntur, et in médium quæsitâ reponunt.*

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improve to the utmost every shining hour; and lay up a stock of balmy treasures, sufficient to supply the whole state, till the blossoms open afresh, and their flowery harvest returns.

Let the peacock boast, if he please, his elegant top-knot and lofty mien; his neck adorned with varying dyes; and his train bespangled with a round of stars.—Yet let him know, that the despised butterfly, and even the loathed caterpillar, display an attire no less sumptuous; and wear ornaments, altogether as genteel, if not quite so magnificent.—Does beauty sit in state on that lordly bird? She shines in miniature on the vulgar insect. Is the master of this lower creation ennobled with the powers of reason? The meanest classes of sensitive existence are endued with the faculty of instinct: which gives them a sagacity, that is neither derived from observation, nor waits for the finishings of experience; which, without a tutor, teaches them all the necessary skill; and enables them, without a pattern, to perform every needful operation; and, what is far more surprising, never misleads them, either into erroneous principles, or pernicious practices; never fails them, in the nicest or most arduous of their undertakings.

Can you have patience to follow me, if I step into a different element, and just visit the watery world?—Not one among the innumerable myriads, which swim the boundless ocean, but is watched over by that exalted eye, whose smiles irradiate the heaven of heavens. Not one, but is supported by that almighty hand, which crowns angels and archangels with glory.—The condescending God has not only created, but beautified them. He has given the most exact proportion to their shape, the gayest colours to their skin, and a polished smoothness to their scales. The eyes of some are surrounded with a scarlet circle; the back of others is diversified with crimson stains. View them, when they glance along the stream, or while they are fresh from their native brine; and the burnished silver is not more bright, the radiant rainbow

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is scarce more glowing, than their vivid, glistening, glossy hues.

Yet, notwithstanding the finery of their apparel, we are under painful apprehensions for their welfare.—How can the poor creatures live, amidst the suffocating waters?—As they have neither hands nor feet, how can they help themselves, or how escape their enemies?—We are soon freed from our fears by observing, that they all possess the beneficial, as well as ornamental furniture of fins. These when expanded, like masts above, and ballast below, poise their floating bodies, and keep them steadily upright.—We cannot forbear congratulating them on the flexible play, and victorious activity of their tails; with which they shoot themselves through the paths of the sea, more swiftly than sails and oars can waft the royal yacht.—But we are lost in wonder, at the exquisite contrivance, and delicate formation of their gills: by which they are accommodated, even in that dense medium, with the power of breathing, and the benefits of respiration. A piece of mechanism this, indulged to the meanest of the fry; yet surpassing, infinitely surpassing, in the fineness of its structure, and the felicity of its operation, whatever is curious in the works of art, or commodious in the palaces of princes.

Ther. Some persons, Aspasio, have the art of giving dignity to trivial, and spirit to jejune topics. I cannot but listen, with a pleased attention, to your discourse, though it descends to the lowest scenes, and meanest productions of nature.—To make such philosophical remarks, was usually my province; to add the religious improvement, yours. But my thoughts, at present, are wholly taken up with the consideration of my Saviour's righteousness. I can hardly turn my views, or divert my speech, to any other subject. All those amiable appearances of the external creation, which I was wont to contemplate with rapture, afford but a languid entertainment to my mind.—Till my interest in this divine Redeemer is ascertained, the

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spring may bloom; the summer shine; and autumn swell with fruits: but it will be winter, cheerless, gloomy, desolate winter in my soul.

— *Asp.* You say, Theron, you attend to my cursory hints. Then your own superior discernment could not but perceive, how every part of the exterior world is adjusted, in the most excellent and gracious manner. Not the coarsest piece of inactive matter, but bears the impress of its Maker's fashioning skill.—Not a single creature, however insignificant, but exhibits evident demonstrations of his providential care.—His hand is liberal, profusely liberal, to all that breathes, and all that has a being.

Let me only ask;—and to introduce this question with the greater propriety, to give it a more forcible energy on our minds, was the principal design of the preceding remarks;—let me ask, “Does God take care for oxen!”* Is he a generous benefactor to the meanest animals, to the lowest reptiles? Are his munificent regards extended further still, and vouchsafed even to the most worthless vegetables? And shall they be withheld from you, my dear friend, and from me?—Not one among all the numberless productions, which tread the ground, or stand rooted to the soil, wants any convenience that is proper for its respective state. And will his heavenly Father deny Theron, what is so necessary to his present comfort, and his final happiness? Impossible!†

Ther. I wish for, but I can hardly hope to partake,

* 1 Cor. ix. 9.

† I know not how to forbear transcribing a paragraph, from one of our periodical papers; which contains a proposal for adapting natural philosophy to the capacity of children; wishing, at the same time, that the ingenious author would enlarge his sketch into a treatise; and execute the plan, which he has so judiciously projected, and of which he has given us so delicate a specimen.

After some remarks on the sagacity of birds, their industry, and other surprising properties, he adds:—Is it for birds, O Lord, that thou hast joined together so many miracles, which they have no knowledge of? Is it for men, who give no attention to them? Is it for the curious, who are satisfied with admiring, without raising their

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of that spiritual blessing; which always included my whole happiness, and now engrosses my whole concern.

Asp. “Not hope to partake of!”—What foundation, what shadow of pretence, has this desponding temper, either in reason or in scripture? Is it not evident from the whole book of revelation; is it not apparent, through the whole compass of nature, that the almighty Lord, “who governeth the world with the palm of his hand,”* is remote, infinitely remote from a niggardly disposition? He not only provideth for the wants, but even “satisfieth the desire of every living thing.”†

Consider those stately poppies, which are now the principal ornament of the garden. They have no tongue to request the least favour. Yet the ever-gracious Maker clothes them from his own wardrobe, and decks them with exquisite beauty.—Observe the young ravens, which sit carelessly croaking on yonder boughs. Do they cry for food?‡ It is in hoarse inarticulate accents. Yet the all-supporting God overlooks their ignorance; hears meaning in their noise; and supplies their very need from his own spontaneous bounty.—If he accommodates the former, though incapable of asking; if he attends to the latter, though insensible of their benefactor; can he disregard our pressing wants? will he reject our earnest petitions? especially, when we seek such pure and exalted gifts; as it is both his delight and his honour to bestow?

O! my friend, look abroad into universal nature, and cast away every disquieting thought.

Ther. Did you inquire what pretence I have for this desponding temper? Alas! I have more than a pre-

thoughts to thee? Or is it not rather visible, that thy design has been to call us to thyself, by such a spectacle? to make us sensible of thy providence and infinite wisdom; and to fill us with confidence in thy bounty, who watches with so much care and tenderness over birds, though two of them are sold but for a farthing?”

* Eccclus. xviii. 3.

† Psal. cxlv. 16.

‡ Psal. cxlvii. 9.

Theron, slow of heart to believe,

tence, I have a reason; a reason too obvious; my great unworthiness!

Asp. Pray, where was the worthiness of the stiff-necked Israelites? Yet the Lord "bare them, and carried them, all the days of old."* Where was the worthiness of Saul the blasphemer? Yet the blessed Jesus made him a chosen vessel, and set him as a signet on his right hand.—You deserve nothing at the hand of God our Saviour. Neither did Joseph's brethren deserve any kindness from the viceroy of Egypt. Yet he delivered them from the famine, who sold him to slavery. He settled them in the choicest territories, who cast him into the horrible pit. He shewed himself a friend and a father to those unnatural relations, who were his actual betrayers, and his intentional murderers.—And can you persuade yourself, will you harbour a suspicion, that Christ is less compassionate than Joseph? Shall a frail mortal outvie Emmanuel in beneficence?

Ther. Is not some righteousness of our own indispensably required, in order to our participation of the righteousness of Christ?

Asp. Yes, such a righteousness as the Samaritan woman,† and Zaccheus the publican, possessed; or such as the Philippian jailor, and the profligate Corinthians, might boast.‡—Zaccheus was a man of infamous character, and chief among the extortioners. The jailor was a barbarous persecutor, and in purpose a self-murderer. Yet our Lord says of the former, "This day," without enjoining any course of previous preparation, "is salvation come to thine house."§ St. Paul directs the latter, without insisting upon any attendant antecedent righteousness, to "believe on the Lord Jesus Christ;" and assures the poor alarmed sinner, that, in so doing, he should "be saved."||

So that nothing is required, in order to our participation of Christ and his benefits, but a conviction of

* Isa. lxii. 9.

† John iv. 18.

‡ 1 Cor. vi. 9, 10.

§ Luke xix. 9.

|| Acts xvi. 31.

is affectionately pressed with evangelical motives.

our need, a sense of their worth, and a willingness to receive them in the appointed way; receive them as the freest of gifts, or as a matter of mere grace. "Come, and take freely,"* is our Master's language, without staying to acquire any graceful qualities, is his meaning.

Ther. Surely, to come without any holiness, without any decent preparative, must be a gross indignity to the divine Jesus. Whoever presents a petition to any earthly sovereign, will think it absolutely necessary, not to appear in a slovenly dishabille, much less in filthy raiment. Does not our Lord himself, in the parable of the wedding garment, inculcate this very point, and caution us against a presumptuous approach?

Asp. In the parable you mention, Christ is both the bridegroom, the feast, and the wedding garment.† And who are invited to an union with this Bridegroom; to be guests at this feast; to be arrayed with this wedding garment?—The messengers are sent, not to the mansion-houses of the rich, or the palaces of the mighty; but to the highways and hedges; where misery mourns, and poverty pines, and baseness hides her head.—To whom is their message addressed? To the poor, the maimed, the halt, the blind:‡ persons who have no amiable or recommending endowments, but every loathsome and disgusting property. Yet these (mark the passage, my dear friend; mark well the encouraging circumstance) these are not only not forbidden, but entreated,—importuned,—and by all the arts of persuasion, by every weighty or winning motive, compelled to come in.—And after all this, surely it cannot be an act of presumption to accept, but must be a breach of duty to refuse the invitation.

Ther. You take no notice of the man, who was found without a wedding garment: which is by far the

* Rev. xxii. 17.

† Mat xxii. 11. "Hæc vestis est justitia Christi." *Bengel. in Loc.*

‡ Luke xiv. 21.

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most alarming incident, and that which gives me no small uneasiness.

Asp. And does my Theron take proper notice of the divine declaration? "I have prepared my dinner," says the King eternal. "All things are ready."* "Whatever is necessary for the justification, the holiness, the complete salvation of sinners, is provided in the merit and the grace of my Son. Let them come, therefore, as to a nuptial banquet; and freely enjoy my munificence; and feast their souls with the royal provision."

The man without a wedding garment, denotes the specious superficial professor; who is "called by Christ's name," but has never "put on Christ Jesus" by faith.—Shall I tell you more plainly whom this character represents? You yourself, my dear Theron, was some months ago in the state of this unhappy creature, when you trusted in yourself, and thought highly of your own, thought meanly of your Saviour's righteousness.

I congratulate my friend, on this happy deliverance from so dangerous a condition. You and I are now like the returning prodigal. Let us remember that he came with no recommendation, either of dress, of person, or of character. None but his nakedness, his misery, and an acknowledgment of vileness, which had every aggravating, not one extenuating circumstance. Yet he was received,—received with inexpressible indulgence; and clothed with that first, that best, that divinest robe,† the righteousness of Jesus Christ.

Let us accustom ourselves to consider this incomparable robe, under its evangelical character. It is not a matter of bargain, nor the subject of sale, but a deed of gift. "The gift of righteousness," says the apostle. And gifts, we all know, are not to be purchased, but received.

Ther. Is nothing then, nothing to be done on our

* Matt. xxii. 4.

† Luke xv. 22. Την στολην πρωτην.

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part?—no heavenly-mindedness to be exercised? no victory over our lusts gained? no fruits of sanctification produced?

Asp. These legal apprehensions! how closely they cleave to my Theron's mind! But, I hope, the word of God, which pierceth to the dividing asunder the soul and spirit, will give the severing blow.—And what says that sacred word? It describes the gospel, as a will or testament;* and all its glorious blessings, as legacies bequeathed by the dying Jesus.—When your old acquaintance Charicles left you a handsome legacy; what did you do to establish your title, and make it your own?

Ther. My title was pre-established by my friend's donation. I had nothing to do, but to claim, to accept, and to possess.

Asp. Do the very same in the present case. They who believe, are heirs, undoubted “heirs of the righteousness which is by faith.”†—Sure you cannot suppose, that Christ's donations are less valid, than those of an earthly testator.

Ther. This illustration hardly reaches the point. I speak not of doing any thing, by way of merit, but by way of qualification.

Asp. If there be any qualification, I think it is our extreme indigence. This indeed it will be proper to have; and this, I presume, you are not without. Other qualification, neither reason prescribes, nor scripture requires.

* Heb. ix. 16, 17. This notion not only runs through the scriptures, but stands conspicuous even in their title-page.—What are they called? The Old and New Testament.—What is a testament? An authentic deed, in which estates are transmitted, and legacies bequeathed. In other testaments, some earthly possession: in this, the heavenly patrimony, even all the riches of grace, and the everlasting inheritance of glory.—Did we consider the scriptures in this light, it would be a most engaging invitation, to search them with assiduity and pleasure. What child is willing to continue ignorant of a deceased parent's last will and testament? Who does not covet to know, what honours, hereditaments, and wealth, devolve to his enjoyment, by such an interesting and venerable conveyance?

† Heb. xi. 7.

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Reason prescribes no other.—The gifts of the great eternal Sovereign are intended, not to recognize our imaginary worth, but to aggrandize our views of his mercy and grace. To answer such a design, the unworthy and the sinners are duly qualified; nay, are the only qualified persons.

Scripture requires no other.—The ever-merciful Saviour says not, They are unqualified for my merits; they have no valuable or noble acquirements. But this is his tender complaint: “They will not come to me,” just as they are; with all their sins about them; with all their guilt upon them; “that they may have life.”*—Pray take notice of this text; and you will see things placed in a new light, ranged in a new order. Sanctification, heavenly-mindedness, and a victory over lusts, are not so much the qualities which he requires, as the blessings which he will confer.

Ther. “The unworthy and sinners, the only qualified!” of this expression I cannot but take particular notice.—Then Judas should stand in the first rank of qualified persons; and the devout centurion, “whose prayers and alms had come up as a memorial before God,” was thereby unqualified for the favour of heaven.

Asp. If you observed my expression, I spoke in the hypothetical manner; made a supposition, rather than advanced an assertion. If there be any qualification, this is the only one. But, strictly speaking, there is no such thing. The impulsive or inclining cause of all God’s favour shewn, of all God’s goodness exercised, is—not from the creature? No; but from himself, himself alone. “He has mercy,” not because this or that person is amiable, is meet, or qualified, but “because he will have mercy.”—And as for our need of mercy and reconciliation, arising from our sinfulness, this can no more constitute a real qualification for the blessings, than an act of rebellion can qualify for the first honours of the state.

* John v. 40.

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But this we must allow, that such need, such misery, such sinfulness, illustrate the freeness, and manifest the riches of grace. And this we should never forget, that God's first and leading purpose, in all his favourable dispensations to fallen man, is to demonstrate the sovereignty, and advance the glory of his grace.—The Lord, promising a very extraordinary deliverance of Israel, says, “Not for your sakes, be it known unto you, do I this”* signal act of kindness.—What then is the inducement? We find it in the following declaration! “I, even I am he, that blotteth out your transgressions for my own sake,† and according to the good pleasure of my will.”—What is the end of all? It is “for the praise of the glory of his grace.”‡ A proper motto this, for all the displays of divine goodness to sinful men. It has been inscribed by the hand of truth and inspiration. Time and eternity, instead of erasing the lines, will only stamp them deeper, and open them wider.

Ther. This is such a gift!—To be interested in all the merits of Christ! To have his immaculate righteousness imputed to my soul!—So that from henceforth there shall be no fear of condemnation, but a comfortable enjoyment of freest love, and a delightful expectation of completest glory!

Asp. If this rich donation surpass your very thoughts, and fill you with grateful astonishment; it is so much the better adapted to display, what the scripture very emphatically styles, the “abundant,” the “superabundant,” the “exceeding abundant”§ the “grace of our God.—God hath pleasure in the prosperity of his servants. He is a boundless ocean of love;

* Ezek. xxxvi. 32.

† Isa. xliiii. 25. יגמל For my own sake. Which teaches us that God, and nothing in the creature, is the original, entire, sole cause of all grace and every gracious vouchsafement. It is not only by him, and through him, but to him; for the honour of his benign perfections, that we are pardoned, accepted, saved.

‡ Eph. i. 6.

§ Υπερβαλλουσα χαρις. 2 Cor. ix. 14.—Υπερπερισσευσει η χαρις. Rom. v. 20.—Υπερπλεουσει η χαρις. 2 Tim. i. 14.

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ever flowing, yet absolutely inexhaustible. See! what an innumerable variety of benefits are transmitted from yonder sun, to gladden all the regions of nature! Yet the sun is but a spark; its highest splendour, no more than a shade; its uninterrupted and most profuse communications of light, a poor diminutive scantling; compared with the riches of divine benignity.

The servant in the parable, who owed ten thousand talents, craved only some merciful forbearance.—Whereas his generous lord remitted the whole sum, and gave him an acquittance in full: “I forgive thee all that debt.”*—You wonder, and very deservedly, at such vast generosity. But what had been your admiration to see the noble master admitting this obnoxious slave to a share in his dignity? what if he had made so worthless a wretch, the chief of his family, and the heir of his estate? This, perhaps you will say, exceeds the bounds of credibility. Yet God Almighty’s stupendous beneficence exceeds all this. He not only spares guilty creatures, but makes them his children: makes them inheritors of his kingdom, and as an introduction to all, or rather as the crown of all, makes them partakers of his Son.†

Ther. The gift is inestimable; of more value than all worlds. It will render me blessed and happy, now and for ever. And may so unworthy a creature look for a blessing, thus superlatively excellent?

Asp. Unworthy!—my dear friend, dwell no longer upon that obsolete topic. The greatest unworthiness in no objection in Christ’s account, when the soul is convinced of sin, and the heart desirous of a Saviour. And as for worthiness, this is as much disavowed by the gospel, as equivocal generation‡ is exploded by the discoveries of our improved philosophy.

* Matt. xviii. 32.

† Heb. iii. 14.

‡ The ancients imagined, that many vegetables and insects were produced by, I know not what, plastic power in the sun, and other elements. This is called equivocal generation. Whereas the modern philosophers maintain, that every individual of this kind derives its being from some parent vegetable or parent animal. This is styled unequivocal generation.

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Nay farther, this notion is diametrically contrary to the gospel, and totally subversive of the covenant of grace.

Ther. In what respect?

Asp. Because it would make our own duty and obedience the terms. Whereas the terms were Christ's suffering, and Christ's obedience. These are the hinges on which the great transaction turns, and on which the hope of the world hangs.

Ther. Be more particular, Aspasio.

Asp. The first covenant was made with Adam, for himself and us. Breaking it, he lost his original righteousness, and became subject to death; was, at once, a bankrupt and a rebel.—Now you cannot suppose, that the almighty Majesty would enter into a fresh covenant with an insolvent and attainted creature. It pleased, therefore, the Second Person of the adorable Trinity, to undertake our cause, to become our surety, and put himself in our stead. With him the second covenant was made. He was charged with the performance of the conditions; thereby to obtain pardon and righteousness, grace and glory, for all his people. "I have made a covenant with my Chosen One,"* is the language of the Most High. And the terms were (you will permit me to repeat the momentous truth) not your worthiness or mine, but the incarnation, the obedience, the death of God's ever-blessed Son.

* Psa. lxxxix. 3. It is generally allowed, that this psalm, in its sublimest sense, is referable to Christ; and, in its full extent, is referable only unto Christ. If so, I think, it would be more significant and emphatical to render כִּי־בָחַרְתִּי "my Chosen One."—This will furnish out a very clear and cogent argument to prove, that the covenant of grace was made with our Lord Jesus. Just such an argument as the apostle uses, to convince the Galatians, that the promises of the covenant were made to the same divine Person. Gal. iii. 16.—From both which premises this important conclusion follows: That justification and every spiritual blessing are the purchase of Christ's obedience; are lodged in him as the great proprietary; are communicated to sinners only through the exercise of faith, or in the way of believing. See Zech. ix. 11.

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Ther. Has man then no office assigned, no part to act, in the covenant of grace?

Asp. He has; but it is a part which my friend seems very loth to discharge. His part is to accept the blessings, fully purchased by the Saviour, and freely presented to the sinner. His part is, not to dishonour the Redeemer's gracious interposition, and infinitely sufficient performance, by hankering after any merit of his own. His part (why will you constrain me to reiterate in this manner?) is, not to bring money in his hand, with the ten brethren; but with an empty hand, and like an impoverished Lazarus, "to take hold of God's covenant."*

Ther. If this be the nature of the new covenant, I must confess, I have hitherto been ignorant of the gospel.

Asp. And from hence arises your present distress; from hence your averseness to receive comfort. You are a philosopher, Theron; and have been accustomed to examine nicely the proportion of objects, rather than to weigh them in the balance of the sanctuary. Here you find all proportion swallowed up and lost. This quite overthrows all your conclusions, drawn from the fitness of things. Here man is nothing, less than nothing, while grace is all in all.—And should we not, however unworthy in ourselves, magnify the grace of our God?

Ther. Most certainly.

Asp. How can this be done, but by expecting great and superlatively precious blessings from his hand?—Alexander, you know, had a famous, but indigent, philosopher in his court. Our adept in science was once particularly straitened in his circumstances. To whom should he apply, but to his patron, the conqueror of the world? His request was no sooner made, than granted. Alexander gives him a commission, to receive of his treasurer whatever he wanted. He immediately demands, in his sovereign's

* Isa. lvi. 4.

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name, a hundred talents.*—The treasurer, surprised at so large a demand, refuses to comply; but waits upon the king, and represents the affair; adding withal, how unreasonable he thought the petition, and how exorbitant the sum.—Alexander hears him with patience: but, as soon as he had ended his remonstrance, replies, “Let the money be instantly paid. I am delighted with this philosopher’s way of thinking. He has done me a singular honour; and shewed, by the largeness of his request, what a high idea he has conceived both of my superior wealth, and my royal munificence.”

Thus, my dear Theron, let us honour, what the inspired penman styles, “the marvellous loving-kindness of Jehovah.” From the king, “whose name is the Lord of hosts,” let us expect,—not barely what corresponds with our low models of generosity, much less what we suppose proportioned to our fancied deserts,—but what is suitable to the unknown munificence of his name, and the unbounded benevolence of his heart. Then we shall cheerfully trust, that Christ Jesus will be “made of God unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption;” that he, who had given himself for us,† will give us of his Spirit,‡ and will give unto us eternal life.§

Ther. Yes, upon condition, that we fight the good fight, and finish our course of duty. Henceforth, says the apostle, after this is done, “there is laid up for me,” and for other victorious soldiers, for other faithful labourers, “a crown of righteousness.”

Asp. To such persons the crown will assuredly be vouchsafed. But is it vouchsafed on account of their successful warfare, or persevering obedience? If so, “Israel may vaunt themselves, and say, Mine own hand,” not the Redeemer’s interposition, “hath saved me.”||

* About ten thousand pounds.

† John iv. 13.

§ John x. 21.

† Eph. v. 2.

|| Judges vii. 2.

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Not to repeat what has already been alleged, in opposition to this opinion;—not to produce what might farther be urged, from a variety of scriptural testimonies;—I shall only desire you to observe, what the apostle himself adds in this very place. “There is laid up for me a crown of righteousness:” but is this the pay, proportionate and due to his own service? Is it what he claims and demands, on the foot of duty performed?—The very title of the reward implies the contrary. It is a crown of righteousness, because purchased by the meritorious and consummate righteousness of Christ. The action of the Judge declares the contrary; “which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day.” It is, you see, an act of favour; the issue of unmerited bounty; what neither saint, nor martyr, nor apostle enjoys, but only by way of gracious donation.*

I would fain have my Theron form more honourable apprehensions concerning the mercy and the bounty of our Lord Jesus Christ. He will bestow what you suppose he exacts. He is really a benefactor, where you would represent him as a taskmaster. “The Lord will give grace, as well as glory.” He knows you have neither strength nor merit, therefore he will supply your want of both, from his own unfathomable fulness.

Ther. Ah! my Aspasio, you don't know my state. I have not only no merit, but great guilt; † was, by

* 2 Tim. iv. 8. The word *αποδοσει*, as it stands in the present connexion, is, I think, very properly explained by a late pious professor of divinity at Glasgow: “Profitetur fiduciam suam de gratuita mercede, quam Deus gratis promisit omnibus fidelibus, et ut justus judex, juste simul et ex gratia rependet, non ex merito ullo nostro, sed priora dona sua gratuita posterioribus gratuito cumulando. Dicksoni Expos. Analyt.

† I believe, no one experienced in the spiritual life will suspect, that Theron speaks out of character.—Conscience, when once alarmed, is a stubborn and unceremonious thing. It pays no deference to wealth; it never stands in awe of grandeur; neither can it be soothed by the refinements of education, or the attainments of learning. And we generally find, that a most unaccountable propensity to self-worthiness strongly

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nature, a child of wrath; have been, by practice, a slave of sin; and, what is worse, am still corrupt, have still a carnal heart.—And has not such a wretch forfeited all title to the divine favour? Nay, does he not deserve the vengeance of eternal fire?

Asp. That we all deserve this misery, is beyond dispute. I am truly glad, that we are sensible of our demerit. Here our recovery begins. Now we are to believe, that the Lord Jesus has satisfied divine justice: has paid a glorious price, on purpose to obtain for such ill-deserving, such hell-deserving creatures, all pardon, all holiness, and everlasting happiness. According to the import of that charming scripture, “When we were enemies (and what is there in an enemy, to bespeak favour, or deserve benefits?) we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son.”*

You have “great guilt.” But is this a reason why you should be excluded from the blessings of the covenant? Contemplate the state of that forlorn and wretched outcast, described in the sixteenth of Ezekiel. An infant “in its blood:” this represents a sinner, who has nothing to excite love, but all that may provoke abhorrence. Yet what says the Holy One of Israel? “When I saw thee,” not washed, and purified, and made meet for my acceptance, but “polluted in thy blood,”† loathsome with defilement, and laden with iniquity: then, even then “I said

possesses the new-awakened convert. He is perpetually raising objections, founded on the want of personal merit; notwithstanding all our remonstrances, to quiet his fears, and remove his jealousies. It is truly a hard task, for a mind, naturally leavened with legal pride, to come naked and miserable to Christ;—to come divested of every recommendation but that of extreme wretchedness; and receive, from the hand of unmerited benignity, the free riches of evangelical grace.

* Rom. v. 10.

† The words are peculiarly emphatical; not only doubled, but redoubled; to denote, at once, the strangeness of the fact, yet the certainty of the favour. When I passed by thee, and saw thee polluted in thine own blood, I said unto thee when thou wast in thy blood, Live: yea, I said unto thee when thou wast in thy blood, Live.” Ezek. xvi. 5.

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unto thee, Live: I spread my skirt over thee, and thou becamest mine." This is the manner of his proceeding, not barely to one nation, but to all his people; not in one period of time only, but through all generations.

You are still corrupt: one that is sensible of his corruption, and acknowledges his sinfulness! Then you are the very person, for whom the Saviour's righteousness is intended; to whom it is promised.—You are a governor of the county-hospital, Theron. You have been industrious in promoting, and are active in supporting, that excellent institution; where Medicine with her healing stores, and Religion with her heavenly hopes, act as joint handmaids to Charity. What are the circumstances which render any persons the proper objects for an admission into your infirmary?

Ther. Their poverty and their distemper. Without poverty they would not need, and free from distemper they would not prize, the benefit of our modern Bethesda.

Asp. Apply this to the case under consideration. The whole world is in a state of spiritual disorder. Christ is styled, by the inspired writer, "the Lord our healer."* The gift of righteousness, the balm of his blood, and the influences of his Spirit, are the sovereign restorative. And sure it cannot be a fanciful persuasion of our health, but a feeling conviction of our disease, which renders us proper objects of his recovering grace.—"He came, not to call the righteous," the righteous in their own eyes, "but sinners,"† but self-condemned and ruined sinners, to give them "repentance," and pardon, and newness of life.

Ther. But if any foolish and refractory patients have abused our beneficence, it is a standing unalterable rule of the house, never to admit them a second time, however pressing their exigences, however

* Exod. xv. 29.

† Matt. ix. 13. Acts v. 31.

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powerful their recommender. I have, not once only, but through the whole course of my life, abused the marvellous loving-kindness of the Lord.

Asp. And is not the Lord superior to all his creatures, in acts of pardon, as well as of power? Yes, as those heavens are higher than the prostrate earth, so much more enlarged and extensive is the divine clemency,—than the widest sphere of human kindness, shall I say?—rather than the boldest flights of human imagination. Your statutes are inexorable, in case of one notorious irregularity committed. “But the free gift” of a Redeemer’s righteousness is vouchsafed, notwithstanding “many offences, unto justification.”* It is the glory of our almighty Ruler, and redounds to the honour of his Son, to pass over† not a single transgression only, but a multitude of provocations; to be altogether as unequalled in mercy, as he is absolutely supreme in majesty.

As it is the grossest pride, to entertain high notions of our own accomplishments, or to expect eternal life on the score of our obedience; so it will be the greatest affront to the grandeur of Christ’s merits, and the freeness of his grace, if we suppose our crimes too heinous to be forgiven, or our persons too vile to be accepted.

Theron paused.—These considerations seemed to operate; this anodyne to take effect.—Desirous to improve the favourable juncture, and impart the needed consolation, *Aspasio* added:

How often did the inhabitants of Jerusalem disregard the warnings, and reject the counsels of our blessed Lord! How justly might he have sworn in his wrath, “They shall never hear the joyful sound of my gospel more. The blessings they have so wantonly despised, and so wickedly abused, shall be irrevocably withdrawn.”—Instead of passing such a sentence, this is the charge, which, after his resurrection, he gives to his apostles; “Let repentance and

* Rom. v. 16.

† Prov. xix. 11.

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remission of sins be preached in my name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.”*—“ At Jerusalem, Lord! Have not the men of that ungrateful and barbarous city been deaf to thy tenderest importunities? Did they not persecute thee unto condemnation and death? Are not their weapons still reeking, as it were, with thy blood? and their tongue still shooting out arrows, even bitter words, by which they would murder thy character, as they have already crucified thy person?”—Yet these wretches (and could any be more inhuman? could any be more unworthy?) are not only not abhorred, but unto them is the message of grace and the word of salvation sent. Nay, to shew the unparalleled freeness of our Redeemer’s grace, these are first upon the heavenly list. The glad tidings of pardon and life, which are to be published through the world, must begin (amazing mercy!) must begin at Jerusalem.

Ther. Thus much I may venture to profess in my own behalf: that I long for this blessing; I pray for this blessing; but I cannot see my title to this comprehensive and inestimable blessing, clear.

Asp. I behold it perfectly clear.—Some days ago, a worthy clergyman, who lately came to settle in the neighbourhood, did himself the honour of making one at your table. After dinner you shewed him your library; we took a walk in your garden, and made the agreeable tour of the fish-ponds. Then,—with that amiable frankness of mien and accent, which is so peculiar to my friend, and exceedingly endears all his favours,—you told him, That he was welcome to any book in your study, as if the whole collection was his own; that if, on a visit from some acquaintance of superior rank, he should wish to be accommodated with a more delicate entertainment than usual, the production of your waters, and of your hot-beds, were entirely at his service: and that his acceptance of your offers, without the least shyness or reserve would

* Luke xxiv. 47.

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be the most pleasing compliment he could pay you on the occasion.

What says the great Proprietor of all good? "If any man," however unworthy his person, or obnoxious his character, "thirst;" thirst for the blessings of my evangelical kingdom; "let him come unto me," the fountain of these living waters, "and drink" his fill.*—You yourself acknowledge, that you long for the sacred privileges of the gospel. Your heart is awakened into habitual and lively desires after the salvation of Christ. What is this but, in the spiritual sense, to thirst? To you therefore the promise is made; to you the riches of this benign dispensation belong.

That clergyman has not the least suspicion of being disappointed, in case he should send for a brace of carp from your canal, or a fine melon from your garden.—Why is he so confident? Because he has done you any signal service? No; but because you have passed your word, and made the generous offer. And why should you harbour the least doubt concerning the divine veracity? Why should you call in question your right to these heavenly treasures? since it is founded on a grant altogether as free, altogether as clear, as your own indulgent concession; and infinitely more firm than any human engagement; founded on the fidelity of that sublime Being, who "remembers his covenant and promise to a thousand generations."

Ther. It is impossible to confute, yet difficult to believe, what you urge.

Asp. What I urge, is not the voice of a few dubious passages, nicely culled from the book of God, or forcibly wrested by the interpretation of man. The whole tenor of inspiration runs, with the greatest perspicuity, and the greatest uniformity, in this delightful strain.—Let me, out of a multitude, produce another, express from the court of heaven. "Ho! every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, even

* John vii. 37.

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he that hath no money. Come ye, buy and eat; yea, come buy wine and milk without money and without price.*—Wine and milk undoubtedly signify the pardon of our sins, and the justification of our persons; the communications of sanctifying grace, and the hope of eternal glory. These are nourishing and refreshing to the soul, as milk, the richest of foods, and as wine, the best of cordials, are to the body. These, you see, are to be obtained, without money and without price; without any merit of our own; without any plea deduced from ourselves; by poor, undone, perishing bankrupts.—They are to be enjoyed by every one, who unfeignedly esteems them, and humbly seeks them. No exception is made; no exclusive clause added. It is not said, any one that is worthy, but every one that thirsteth.—To leave no room for and any misgiving apprehension, the kind invitation is repeated, “Buy and eat; buy wine and milk.” The invaluable yet free tender is confirmed again and again; “He that hath no money: without money; without price.” And both are pressed upon us with a very remarkable, with the most affectionate vehemence; “Come ye; come ye; yea, come.”

Had our heavenly Benefactor permitted us to draw up this instrument of conveyance, and word it according to our own wish; what language could we have contrived, to render either the grant more free, or our claim more secure?

Ther. These are cheering truths. They amount to little less than a demonstration. And I am ready to declare, in the language of Agrippa, almost thou persuadest me to commence a believer.

Asp. And why, my dear friend, why not altogether! Can you distrust the sincerity of the divine overtures? If the overtures are real, your title is unquestionable.—Nay, there is more than an overture. You have an actual gift from the almighty Majesty. “To us,” says the prophet,—including all that wait for the re-

* Isa. lv. 1.

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demption of Christ, and the consolation of Israel,—“ a child is born.”* “ To us,”—he repeats the precious truth; to declare his exuberant joy,† and denote the absolute certainty‡ of the thing,—“ a son is given;” even God’s own Son, the ever-blessed Jesus, to be our propitiation, our Surety, our complete Redeemer.

Just cast a look upon yonder neat lodge. Though placed in the centre of a spacious field, it seems to be contiguous with the extremity of the vista. The eye, travelling over such a length of ground, has almost lost the windows, and the decent ornaments of the front. But I shall not soon lose the idea of that amiable munificence; which, as I was rambling one pleasant morning, and accidentally called at the house, I learned from its present owner.—He was, I find, one of your servants; had spent several years in your family; when he settled in the world, you bestowed upon him that commodious box, and a pretty adjacent farm; to possess, without molestation or control, during his life.—Does he not reckon the little estate, by virtue of your donation, to be his own; as much his own, for the time prescribed, as if he had paid an equivalent in money?—Since the Lord Jehovah has given us his Son, and all his unutterable merits; why should we not, with an assurance of faith, receive this incomparable gift? Why should we not confide in it, as the firmest deed; and far more inviolable than any royal patent? Especially since it has been sealed to us in every sacramental ordinance, and witnessed by every good motion of the Holy Spirit in our hearts.

* Isa. ix. 6.

† Virgil has copied the prophet’s fine manner. He represents joy, uttering her sentiments, in the same spirited strain, with the same reiterated earnestness:

—————Humilemque videmus
Italiam. Italiam primus conclamat Achates.
Italiam læto socii clamore salutant.

‡ See Gen. xii. 32.

Theron, slow of heart to believe,

Ther. My servant never affronted my authority. If he had vilified my character, or insulted my person, should I then have been inclined to make the same advantageous settlement?

Asp. Herein appears the infinite superiority of the divine bounty. God is rich in mercy, not only to the obedient and grateful, but to the unthankful and unworthy. "To the Lord our God," says the prophet, "belong mercies and forgivenesses;" in measure superabundant, and in continuance unwearied; and in this, "notwithstanding we have" offended him, by our manifold failures in duty; nay, have "rebelled* against him," by flagrant violations of his law.

In sweet concert with this prophetic lesson, sings the transported psalmist: "Thou, Lord," in thy sacred humanity, "hast ascended up on high;" ascended from the low caverns of the tomb, to the highest throne in the highest heavens.—"Thou hast led captivity captive:" hast abolished death, that universal tyrant; and subdued those powers of darkness, which had enslaved the whole world.—Like a glorious and

* Dan. ix. 9. The original word is מַרְדּוּת than which no expression, in the Hebrew language, bears a more obnoxious signification. It denotes the most audacious and the most flagitious impiety. It denotes that "rebellion which is as the sin of witchcraft; and that stubbornness, which is as the iniquity of idolatry." Yet all virulent and execrable as it is, it does not suppress the yearnings of divine pity, nor supersede the exercise of divine forgiveness.—With a word derived from the same root, Saul, when, exasperated almost to madness, upbraids Jonathan. And we know, persons so extremely incensed, never speak in the softest terms; never touch the subject with a feather, but make their tongue like a sharp sword.

May I venture to add, that our translators seem to mistake the proper application of the aforementioned passage? They represent Saul's invective, flying as wide of the mark, as it is overcharged with malice.—"Son of the perverse rebellious woman!" this might be asserted, without the least impeachment of Jonathan's personal loyalty.—Besides, is it not excessively indecent, as well as absolutely unreasonable, to reflect upon the mother for the misdemeanors of the son?—Surely the clause should be rendered in perfect consistence with the genius of the original: Thou son of perverse rebellion; or, more agreeably to the English idiom, Thou perverse rebellious wretch!" 1 Sam. xx. 20.

is affectionately pressed with evangelical motives.

triumphant conqueror, thou hast also received gifts; not merely for thy own fruition, but to confer on others, by way of honorary and enriching largess.—What are those gifts, Theron?

Ther. The gifts of the gospel, I suppose; pardon of sin, the influences of the Holy Spirit, and those other privileges of christianity, which constitute the present happiness of mankind, and prepare them for future bliss.

Asp. You rightly judge.—And for whom were those royal, those heavenly donatives received? If you have an inclination to bestow a sword set with diamonds, a finely wrought piece of plate, or an exquisitely finished picture; what names present themselves to your thoughts? what persons are the objects of your choice? The approved friend, or distinguished favourite, I make no question.—But for whom (let me ask again, since it is a point of the last importance) were those heavenly donatives received?

Ther. Let me recollect:—"Thou receivedst gifts,"—not for fallen angels, but "for men;"—and not for thy friends, but for thy "enemies;"—yea, "for the rebellious also."*—Merciful heaven! What a word is this! and does it come from the God of truth?—Gifts! divine gifts! gifts of unspeakable value, and eternal duration! and these to be conferred on enemies, on the rebellious! wretches, who are destitute of all gracious qualifications; who deserve not the least favour; but have reason to expect the frowns of indignation, and the sword of vengeance!

Asp. Thus it is written, in those sacred constitutions, which are far more steadfast and unalterable than the law of the Medes and Persians. Thus it is spoken by the mouth of that almighty Being, with whom there is no variableness, nor the least shadow of turning.—Let us not, my dear friend, by unreasonable unbelief, frustrate all these promises, and reject our own mercies. Let us not, by an evil heart of unbeli

* Psa. lxviii. 18.

Theron feels and confesses the force of his friend's arguments.

make God a liar; and make ourselves, of all creatures, most miserable.

But see! the clouds which hung their agreeable sables, to damp the ardour, and abate the glare of the day, are departing. The sun has been colouring their fleecy skirts, and spreading over the floating screen a variety of interchangeable hues. Now he begins to edge them with gold, and shine them into silver. A sure indication, that (like the glittering, but transitory toys, which they represent) they will soon be swept from the horizon, and seen no more. The bright orb, while we are speaking, bursts the veil; and, from a voluminous pomp of parting clouds, pours a flood of splendour over all the face of nature.—We shall quickly perceive this open situation too hot to consist with pleasure; and must be obliged to seek for shelter, in the shady apartments of the house.

Will you admit me, Theron, into those shady apartments?

Ther. Admit you, Aspasio!—I am surprised at your question. I thought you had known me better; and I am sorry it should be needful to assure you, that my house is as much your own, as it is mine. The more freely you command it, the more highly you will oblige me.

Asp. May I believe you, Theron? Do you speak from your heart? or must I conclude, that you plausibly profess, what you have no intention to perform?—Would you be pleased, if I should obstinately persist in these dishonourable suspicions, notwithstanding all your friendly protestations?

Ther. My dear Aspasio, I see your design. I see, and am ashamed; ashamed to think, that I should fancy myself more punctual in my professions, than God is true to his word.—“Lord, I believe; help thou my unbelief!”





THE BON and ASPASIO.
 Dialogue the Sixteenth.

R.M. Craig del.

J. Palmer sc.

DIALOGUE XVI.

OUR friends had agreed upon a visit to Philenor. They rode through a fine, open, fruitful country; which was covered with crops of ripened corn, and occupied by several parties of rustics gathering in the copious harvest.

The rye, white and hoary as it were with age, waved its bearded billows, and gave a dry husky rustle before the breeze.—The wheat, laden with plenty, and beautifully brown, hung the heavy head; and invited, by its bending posture, the reaper's hand.—Plats of barley, and acres of oats, stood whitening in the sun. Upright and perfectly even, as though the gardener's shears had clipped them at the top, they gratified the spectator's eye, and gladdened the farmer's heart.—Beans, partly clad in native green, partly transformed and tawny with the parching ray, were preparing the last employ for the crooked weapon.—Some of the grain lay flat, in regular rows, on the new-made stubble. Some were erected, in graceful shocks, along the bristly ridges. Some, conveyed homewards on the loaded waggon, nodded over the groaning axle.

The villages seemed to be empty, and all their inhabitants poured into the plains. Here were persons of each sex, and of every age.—The lusty youths, stooping to their work, plied the sickle; or swept, with their scythes, the falling ranks.—The sprightly females followed, binding the handfuls into sheaves, or piling the swarths into the hasty cocks.—Dispersed up and down were the children of the needy, gleaning the scattered ears, and picking their scanty harvest.—Nor were the old people absent; but crawling into the sun, or sitting on a shady eminence, they beheld the toils,—the pleasing toils they once sustained.

Philenor's gardens.

This is the most joyful period of the countryman's life; the long expected crown of all his labours. For this he broke the stubborn glebe, and manured the impoverished soil. For this he bore the sultry beams of summer, and shrunk not from the pinching blasts of winter. For this he toiled away the year, in a round of ceaseless but willing activity; knowing that "the husbandman must labour, before he partakes of the fruits."* And will not the blessed hope of everlasting life, will not the bright expectation of consummate bliss, animate us with an equally cheerful resolution, both to resist the temptations, and discharge the duties, of our present state?

Short seemed the way, and quick passed the time, as they travelled through such scenes of rural abundance and rural delight.—Before they were aware, the horses stopt at Philenor's seat: where they found, to their no small disappointment, that the master was gone abroad. They alighted however, and took a walk in the gardens.

The gardens, at proper intervals, and in well-chosen situations, were interspersed with pieces of statuary. At the turn of a corner, you are—not shocked with a naked gladiator, or a beastly Priapus,—but agreeably surprised with the image of Tully. He is just risen from his seat, and upon the point of addressing himself to some important oration. A reverential awe appears in his countenance; such as silently acknowledges, that he is going to plead before the rulers of the world. Sedate at the same time, and collected in himself, he seems conscious of superior

* Tim. ii. 6. Beza thinks that in settling the construction of this verse, the adverb *πρῶτον* should be connected with the participle *κοπιῶντα*. If so, the translation exhibited above, may bid fair for acceptance; and one of the most celebrated historians, may have the honour of commenting on the greatest of the apostles: "Næ illi falsi sunt, qui diversissimas res expectant, ignaviæ voluptatem, et præmia virtutis." Sallust. i. e. They are, beyond all dispute, most egregiously mistaken, who hope to unite those incompatible things, the pleasures of indolence, and the rewards of industry.

His choice of statues commended.

eloquence, and emboldened by the justice of his cause. His thoughtful aspect, and gracefully expanded arm, speak to the eye, before the tongue has uttered a syllable.

You enter an alley, lined on either side with a verdant fan; and having no variety of objects to diversify the intermediate space, your view is conducted to a magnificent building at the end. As you walk along, contemplating the masterly performance in architecture, an unexpected opening diverts your attention; and presents you with some striking imitation of virtuous or heroic life.—Not the Macedonian madman; nor Sweden's royal knight-errant; nor Cesar, infamously renowned for his slaughtered millions; but the truly gallant Czar. A drawn sword in his hand, and a commanding majestic sternness on his brow. The weapon is held in the most menacing posture; and many a spectator has been observed to start back, with apprehensions of fear. It is that gloriously severe attitude, in which the grateful citizens of Narva beheld him, and in which all posterity will admire him, when he turned upon his own victorious but ungovernable troops, and threatened to drench the dagger in their hearts, if they did not immediately desist from rapine and slaughter;* immediately allow quarter to their vanquished foes.

Under a circular dome, supported by pillars of the Doric order, and in a spot where several walks centre, stands—not the Venus a Medicis; corrupting, while it captivates the world,—but a Spartan mother. Her habit decent and graceful; somewhat like the Juna Matrona of the Romans. Her air stately and resolved; expressive of dignity, yet mingled with softness. She holds a shield; is in the act of delivering

* “As soon as the soldiers were masters of the town (Narva), they fell to plunder, and gave themselves up to the most enormous barbarities. The Czar ran from place to place, to put a stop to the disorder and massacre. He was even obliged to kill with his own hand several Muscovites, who did not hearken to his orders.”—Voltaire's Hist. Charles XII.

On purity of taste in the choice of statues.

it to her son; a youth setting out for the army, and going to hazard his life in the defence of his country. She is supposed to add that spirited and magnanimous exhortation, which is engraven on the protuberance of the buckler,—*η ταν, η επι ταν*. “Bring it back, my son, as thy trophy; or be brought back upon it, as thy bier.”

I am particularly pleased, said Theron, with the contrivance of this last ornament. It is regulated by one of the most refined rules of art; not to lavish away all the beauty at a single view, but to make a skilful reserve for some future occasion.—The dome and the columns afford pleasure, when beheld at a considerable distance. The fine animated figure in the midst displays its graces, on a nearer approach. By which means, the attention is kept awake, and the entertainment continues new.

But what I principally admire, is the spirit or style of the decorations in general. They put me in mind of a very just remark, which Mr. Pope has somewhere made. It is, if I remember right, to this effect.—“A man not only shews his taste, but his virtue, in the choice of his ornaments. A proper piece of history, represented in painting on a rich man’s walls, or exhibited in imagery amidst his gardens, is very often a better lesson, than any he could teach by his conversation. In this sense the stones may be said to speak, when men cannot, or will not.”—All but the comparative or satirical part of the observation, I would apply to the prospect before us, and its worthy owner.

Asp. Philenor’s gardens are, I think, more chaste and delicate in their ornaments, than a certain collegiate church. In the latter place, we might reasonably expect the strictest adherence to purity, if we should not meet with the symbols of piety, and incitements to religion.—What then would be the reflections of a judicious observer, if, in such a solemn and venerable edifice, he should see a huge brawny fellow stuck up against the wall, with his posteriors half

Indelicacy of one in Westminster Abbey.

bare, his whole body more than half naked, and in an attitude none of the most decent.*—Excuse me, Theron. I confess myself ashamed even to rehearse the description. How then can the spectacle itself become the house of divine worship?—

Ther. But perhaps this brawny fellow may represent a heathen demigod; one of the idols worshipped by antiquity; the tutelary deity of valour.

Asp. And will this justify the practice? Does not this add profaneness to immodesty? Are we christians to thank Hercules for the valour of our warriors, and make our acknowledgment to Pallas for the conduct of our generals? Shall we christians behold with admiration, or recognize as our benefactors, what the apostle has stigmatized under the character of “ devils?”†

If he, who overthrew the tables of the money-changers, had taken a walk in these famous cloisters, I am apt to suspect, he would have paid no very

* Referring to the monument, lately erected for Major-General Fleming, in Westminster Abbey. Where, under the General's bust, are placed Hercules and Pallas. Hercules with his club and lion's skin, in the manner related above. Pallas, with a mirror and a serpent at her side.—The reader may see a picture and an explanation of this monument, in the Gentleman's Magazine for August, 1754.

As this church has been the burial place of the most illustrious persons, for many centuries; as it is the place, where all our kings receive their crowns, and many of them deposit their ashes; as it is singularly eminent for its antiquities and monuments; there is a large resort both of natives and foreigners, to view its grand and awful curiosities. Whatever, therefore, is erected in a place so circumstanced and distinguished, should, I apprehend, not only display an air of elegance, in the execution, but include a beauty of holiness in the design: because nothing can lay claim to the *το καλον* which is not possessed of the *το πρεπον*. Nor can any performances thus situated, be pronounced truly graceful, such only as correspond with the character, and subserve the design, of the sacred edifice. It was thought by a very able critic and a very candid writer, that mere impropriety of taste in ornamenting one of the monuments, called for his censure. Surely then a violation of decency, and an approach to paganism, call more loudly for public animadversion, and proper reformation. See Spect. Vol. I. No. 26.

† 1 Cor. x. 20.

Impropriety of decorating our churches with heathen imagery.

agreeable compliment to this fine piece of statuary. "Take these things hence," would probably have been his command; and "make not the precincts of your temple a chamber of pagan imagery,"* his rebuke.—Neither is it at all unlikely, that the image itself, notwithstanding its inimitable workmanship, might have shared the fate of its kinsman Dagon:

—————When the captive ark
Maim'd his brute image, head and hands lopp'd off
In his own temple, on the groundsell edge
When he fell flat, and sham'd his worshippers.†

Ther. But how should the artist represent the great achievements and the shining qualities of his hero, if you will not allow him to make use of these significant emblems?

Asp. I question, whether they are so very significant. The mirror seems to characterize a fop, rather than a soldier. It leads us to think of a soft Narcissus, admiring himself; rather than a sagacious general, planning the operations of the campaign.—Besides, is sacred literature so destitute of proper emblems, that we must borrow the decorations of our churches, and the trophies of our conquerors, from the dreams of superstition or the delusions of idolatry? How just and expressive are those emblematical representations, exhibited in Ezekiel's vision! where activity and speed are signified, by hands in conjunction with wings; and the deep, the complicated, yet ever-harmonious schemes of Providence, by "a wheel in the middle of a wheel." With what propriety and force are the noblest endowments pictured, in the revelations of St. John, and their grand machinery! Superior wisdom and benevolence of heart, are described by the face of a man; strength of mind and intrepidity of spirit, by the visage of a lion; calmness of temper and indefatigable application, by the features of an ox; a penetrating discernment, and an expeditious habit of acting, by the form of "a flying eagle."‡

* John ii. 16.

† Milton, b. I. 458.

‡ Rev. iv. 7.

Grove of evergreens.

These hieroglyphics are graceful, are pertinent, and such as every spectator will understand. Whereas the devices of our new monumental encomiums are, I presume, to the unlearned hardly intelligible; to the serious, little better than profane; and to every beholder, indelicate, if not immodest.—Philenor, I imagine, would blush to admit them into his walks or avenues. And I am sorry to find them received into the most ancient,* most renowned, and most frequented church in the kingdom.

Talking in this manner, they come to a curious grove, formed on that uncommon plan, proposed by Mr. Addison, in one of his Spectators. It consisted wholly of evergreens. Firs, clad in verdant silver, pointed their resinous leaves, and shot aloft their towering cones. Laurels, arrayed in glossy green, spread their ample foliage, and threw abroad their rambling boughs. Bay-trees were expanded into a fan, that no weather could tarnish; or rounded into a column, that knew not how to moulder. While the lauristinus ran out into a beautiful irregularity of shape; and compacted her reddening gems, in order to unfold her whitening bloom.—In one place lay a dale, gently sinking, and coated with the chamomile's natural frieze; which never changes its colour, never loses its gloss. Near it, and scooped, you would imagine from the same hollow, arose a mount, softly swelling, and shagged with furze; gay with perennial verdure, and generally decked with golden blossoms. Here you are led through a serpentine walk, and edges of box; and find, perhaps, a solitary pyramid or a capacious urn, each composed of unfading yew. There you look through a strait alley, secured on either side,

* Some antiquarians trace back the origin of this church, even to the reign of Lucius; which is more than the space of 1500 years. Others suppose, that Sebert, king of the East Saxons, about the year of our Lord 605, built the first religious structure on this spot. All agree, that it was re-edified and enlarged by Edward the Confessor; and that the present stately and magnificent fabric was founded by Henry III.

The unfading pleasures of true religion.

and arched over head, with mantling philirea; and see, at the extremity, an obelisk sheathed in ivy, and ornamented with its sable clusters, as with wreaths of living sculpture.—Scattered up and down, were several sorts of holly; some striped with white; some spotted with yellow; some preparing to brighten and beautify the scene, with berries of glowing scarlet.

The heads of the trees, arising one above another, in a slope, from the diminutive mezereon to the lofty cyprus; the several shadings of their green attire, greatly diversified, and judiciously intermixed; afford, especially in the winter season, a most enlivened and lovely prospect.—As the sunshine is, by the frequenters of this grove, usually more coveted than the shade; it is so disposed, as to admit, in one part or another, every gleam of fine weather, which exhilarates the winter.

Asp. There must be something unspeakably pleasing in a plantation, which appears lively and fruitful when all its neighbours of the woodland race are barren, bleak, or dead. But how much more cheering and delightful must it be, when decrepit age, or bodily infirmities, have impaired the vigour, and laid waste the gratifications, of our youthful prime, to find a solid undecaying pleasure in the favour of God, and the hopes of glory!—Now indeed the feathered tribes resort to the more flowing umbrage of the poplar and the ash. But, amidst December's cold, you shall observe them forsaking the leafless woods, and flocking to this friendly receptacle; hopping across the sunny walks, or sheltering themselves, in the wet and stormy days, under these trusty boughs. So the many thoughtless creatures, who turn their back upon religion, amidst the soft and soothing caresses of prosperity, will want, extremely want, its sovereign supports, under the sharp and distressing assaults of adversity, sickness, and death.—This collection, it is true, may not equal the groves of annual verdure, in floridity of dress; but it far exceeds them, in the duration of its ornaments. Ere long, yonder showy

Every refuge but the righteousness of Christ will fade as a leaf.

branches will be stript of their holiday clothes: whereas these will retain their honours, when those are all rags or nakedness. Thus will it be with every refuge for our poor, imperfect, sinful souls; excepting only the righteousness of our Lord Jesus Christ. Every thing else will “fade as a leaf.”* This, my Theron, and this alone is an evergreen; always free for our acceptance, and always effectual to save.

Ther. An evergreen it is. But, like the ruddy and inviting fruits, which hang on the uppermost boughs of those lofty trees in the orchard, it seems to be quite out of my reach.

Asp. Are you sensible, that you need the immaculate and perfect righteousness of our Saviour?

Ther. Was Jonah sensible, how much he needed the cooling shelter of his gourd, when the sun smote fiercely upon his temples, and all the fervours of the fiery east were glowing around him.—So is your Theron sensible, that, without a far better righteousness than his own, he must inevitably be condemned by the sentence of the law, and cannot possibly stand before the high and holy God.

Asp. Remember then, what our Lord says to such persons: “Come unto me, all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest.”† How gracious is the invitation? “Come unto me,” the Father of compassions, and the giver of every good gift.—How extensive as well as gracious! All that are “weary,”‡ toiling in a fruitless pursuit of happiness, and spending your labour for that which satisfieth not. All that are “heavy laden,”§ oppressed with the servitude of sin, or bowed down under a load of misery.—These, all these are called; and you, my friend, in the number.—They have not a ticket, a bond, or some inferior pledge, to ascertain their success; but they have a promise from faithfulness and truth itself. “I will

* Isa. lxiv. 6.

‡ Καπιωθεις.

† Matt. xi. 28.

§ Πεφοβησμενοι.

Theron, slow of heart to believe,

give you rest," says the Strength of Israel; whose will is fate, and his word the basis of the universe. And if Christ will give you rest, he will wash you in that blood which atones, and invest you with that righteousness which justifies; since nothing short of these mercies can afford any satisfaction to the guilty conscience, or true satisfaction to the restless soul.—Permit me to ask further, Do you earnestly desire this righteousness?

Ther. Will yonder hirelings, when fatigued with the heat and burden of a long, laborious, sultry day, desire the shades of the evening, and the repose of the night?—I can truly, on this occasion, adopt the words of the prophet? "The desire of my soul is to thy name," blessed Jesus, "and to the remembrance" of thy righteousness. The very mention of this spotless righteousness is music to my ears. Every fresh, though distant discovery of it, gleams pleasure upon my mind. And that would be a welcome day, a day greatly to be distinguished, which should bring it near to my view, and home to my soul.

Asp. Say not then, my dear friend, that Christ, and the blessings of his purchase, are beyond your reach. They are now, even now at your door. You need not argue anxiously and despondingly, "Who shall ascend into heaven, to bring down Christ from above? or, who shall descend into the deep, to bring up Christ from beneath?"* There is no such impossibility, no such difficulty in the thing. Christ and his righteousness, Christ and his salvation, are brought nigh in the word of promise. And "if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus," as dying on the cross for thy redemption; "thou shalt be saved."† In so doing, thou shalt receive remission of sin, and power to withstand its temptations.

Have you never, in your travels, been overtaken by the dark and tempestuous night? When, chilled with

* Rom. x. 6, 7.

† Rom. x. 9.

is affectionately pressed with evangelical motives.

the cold, and almost drowned in the rain, you arrived at the house of some valued friend, was you not willing to gain admittance?

Ther. Willing! I was desirous, I was almost impatient. I thought every moment an hour, till the hospitable door opened; till I exchanged the dismal gloom and driving storm, for the cheerful light and the amiable company within.

Asp. The adored Emmanuel professes himself equally willing to come unto you. "Behold!" says the Saviour of the world, "I stand at the door, and knock. If any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in unto him, and will sup with him, and he with me."*—Like one exposed to all the inclemencies of the air, whose "head is filled with dew, and his locks with the drops of the night,"† he is not only willing, but desirous to enter." "He stands at the door," with great long-suffering and perseverance; till all obstacles are removed, or rather till that one grand obstacle is taken out of the way, unbelief.—"He knocks," by the preaching of his word, and the promise of his gospel; like one who solicits admission, and will take no denial.—Hear then his soliciting voice, and "he will sup with you;" will make his abode with you, will manifest his glories in you, and communicate his grace to you. Believe his promising word, and "you shall sup with him;" this will be refreshing to your distressed soul, as the most sumptuous banquet to the famished stomach and craving appetite.

Ther. I cannot open my heart.

Asp. Christ has the key of David. "He openeth, and none can shut; he shutteth, and none can open."‡—He is able to make all grace, not only to exist in you, but abound towards you.§—And, what is still more encouraging, he is professedly the author and the finisher of our faith.|| Since he has claimed this cha-

* Rev. iii. 20.

† Cant. v. 2.

‡ Rev. iii. 7.

§ 2 Cor. ix. 8.

|| Heb. xii. 2.

Theron, slow of heart to believe,

racter to himself, since he has undertaken to execute this office, why should we harbour the least distrust? Will he not fulfil his own office, and act agreeably to his own character? Be not, my dear Theron, be not faithless, but believing.

Ther. This I believe,—that I am a lost sinner; under the curse of the law, and liable to the wrath of God; that there is no relief for my distress, but in Christ and his transcendent merits. He, and he alone, is able to save me from my guilt, and all its dismal train of miseries. He is a Saviour fully proportioned to my wants; exactly suited to my several necessities.—I believe, and am persuaded, that, if I was interested in the divine Jesus, my soul should live.

Asp. Be persuaded likewise, that there is no clogging qualification, no worth to be possessed, no duty to be performed, in order to your full participation of Christ and his riches. Only believe, and they are all your own. “Christ dwelleth in our hearts,”—how? by legal works, and laborious pre-requisites? No; but “by faith?”* “He that believeth on the Son, hath”—a chimerical? far from it; a real and substantial happiness; even “everlasting life.”†

Ther. Ah! my Aspasio! I cannot believe. I feel my impotence. My mind is, as you formerly hinted, like the withered arm.

Asp. It is no small advantage, Theron, to be convinced of our inability in this respect. This is, if not the beginning of faith, the sign of its approach; and shews it to be, if not in the soul, yet at the very door.—Fear not, my friend. He who bids you stretch out, will strengthen the withered arm. He first makes us sensible of our weakness, and then “fulfils all the good pleasure of his will, and the work of faith with power.”‡

Can you doubt of his willingness? Then go to mount Calvary. There listen to “the sounding of

* Eph. iii. 17.

† John iii. 36.

‡ 1 Thes. i. 11.

is affectionately pressed with evangelical motives.

his bowels, and of his mercies towards you.”* Has not every drop of blood a tongue? Cannot you read a language in each streaming wound, and hear a voice in every dying pang?—Do they not all speak his infinite love even to wretched sinners? Do they not all address you with that tender remonstrance, “O thou of little faith, wherefore dost thou doubt?”† Nay, do they not all declare, with an energy superior to the force of words, that he will deny you no manner of thing that is good.

Who gave his blood, what gift will he withhold!

Ther. I am ashamed to recollect, what mistaken notions I once entertained concerning the easiness of believing; as though it were to be performed, like the act of rising from our seat, or stepping into a coach, by our own strength, and at our own time. What a stranger was I then to the blindness of my understanding, and the hardness of my heart, to my bondage under unbelief, and averseness to the way of salvation “by grace through faith?”

Asp. Since you are sensible of your impotence, beware of the contrary extreme. Because you cannot, by your own strength, exercise faith, let not this occasion a tame resignation of yourself to infidelity. You must endeavour, diligently endeavour, to believe; and wait, and pray, for the divine Spirit. Though it is his office to testify of Christ, and bring near the Redeemer’s righteousness,‡ yet his influences are not to supersede, but to encourage our own efforts.—“Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling:” here is our duty. “For it is God that worketh in you both to will and to do:”§ here is our encouragement. And O! what a glorious encouragement, to have the arm of Omnipotence stretched out for our support and our succour!

* Isa. lxiii. 15.

† Isa. xlv. 1.

‡ Matt. xiv. 31.

§ Phil. ii. 12, 13.

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Ther. How, or in what manner, does the divine Spirit work faith in the heart of a sinner? You wonder, perhaps, that I ask such a question. But my apprehensions are strangely dull, and my views very dim, with regard to spiritual things. If in this respect I have any sight, it is like his, who “saw men as trees walking;” saw these several objects, but so obscurely, so confusedly, that he could distinguish one from the other, only by the circumstance of motion.

Asp. The most enlightened minds see only in part; and all have reason to make the blind beggar’s supplication their own request, “Lord, that I may receive my sight!”—The operation of the Holy Spirit in producing faith is thus described by a master in Israel! “The divine Spirit brings Christ and his righteousness nigh unto us in the promise of the gospel; clearing at the same time our right and warrant to intermeddle with all, without fear of vitious intromission; encouraging and enabling to a measure of confident application, and taking home all to ourselves, freely, without money, and without price.”

You was once, Theron, a zealous advocate for good works. Now you seem to have abandoned your clients. Remember, my dear friend, what our Lord Jesus Christ says, “This is the work of God,”* of all works most acceptable and most honourable to the divine Majesty, “that you believe on him whom he hath sent.”

Ther. The true belief, according to your notion, Aspasio, is so refined and exalted a virtue, that I very much question, whether I shall ever be able to attain it.

Asp. If you are unable to attain it, is the Lord unable to give it? Our sufficiency for this and every good work, is not in ourselves, but in God. And to him difficulties are easy. Before him mountains are plain.—You will please to remember, that sinners

* John vi. 29.

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are said to believe, not through their own ability, but through the power of grace. And you will permit me to ask, how you became acquainted with my notion of faith?

Ther. I am not so inattentive a reader of your letters, as to forget your definition of this momentous article. Faith, you say, is "a real persuasion;* that the blessed Jesus has shed his blood for me, and fulfilled all righteousness in my stead; that through this great atonement and glorious obedience, he has purchased, even for my sinful soul, reconciliation with God, sanctifying grace, and all spiritual blessings."†

Asp. I am obliged to you, Theron, for the honour you do my letter; and I hope, you will pay an equal regard to the determination of our church. You once apprehended, that my attachment to the church of England was unsettled and wavering. Judge now, who has most thoroughly imbibed her doctrines, and is most invariably tenacious of her true interests. In the first part of the homily concerning the sacrament, we have this definition of faith: "It is a belief, not only that the death of Christ is available for the remis-

* Budæus and Stephens derive the original word from *πτεπιστοι*, he is persuaded: and, I think, very properly; for whatever we believe, of that we have a real persuasion.—The latter most accurate and masterly critic gives this interpretation of *πιστις*, "Persuasio certa, quam in nobis efficit Spiritus Sanctus, de salute in Christo promisa, quam sibi quisque credendo applicat." To corroborate which exposition, he adds, "Hac etiam in significatione nomen fidei a theologis Latinus receptum fuit."

† See Letter X.—Here is, it must be acknowledged, a total omission of all preparatory or rather impulsive dispositions; such as conviction of sin, and hungering after salvation.—Here is likewise a total silence concerning all causes, instrumental or efficient, such as the power of the divine Word, and the agency of the divine Spirit.—No mention is made of the fruits or concomitants: such as, love to Christ, love of the brethren, or purity of heart.—Nothing is exhibited to view, but the form and essence of faith; or that particular act, which characterizes and constitutes real faith; which distinguishes it from the hypocritical pretension, and the historical notion.—This simple view is given, that the mind may fix upon the grand point, and not be embarrassed with a multiplicity of ideas.

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sion of sins, and reconciliation with God, but also that he made a full and sufficient sacrifice for thee, a perfect cleansing for thy sins.”*

My notion of faith, you see, is evidently the voice of the establishment; and I think it gives us a clear intelligible sense, suited to the most common acceptance of the word; such as would naturally arise in the mind of a stranger, who, without any bias on his judgment, should inquire into the purport of our religion, or consider the language of our Bible.

Ther. How suited to the most common acceptance of the word?

Asp. When you sent a message to your tenant,—who, in his last sickness, expressed so much uneasiness on account of his numerous family, and embarrassed circumstances,—assuring him, that you had cancelled the bond, and forgiven his debt; when you told the poor woman,—whose husband fell from the loaded waggon, and broke both his legs,—that you would order a surgeon to attend him, and would continue his weekly pay: how did they regard, how receive your kindness? So let us credit the gracious declarations of our God; so accept his faithful promise; and then we shall answer the import of the word,—then we shall truly believe.

Ther. Where is there, in scripture, any thing parallel or similar to these instances?

Asp. Have you never read the words of Micah? “Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by transgression?”† Here is the gracious declaration.—“He will turn again; he will have compassion upon us; he will subdue our iniquities.”‡ Here is the faithful promise.—And why, my friend, why should we pay less credit to the ever-living Jehovah, than to a man, “whose breath is in his nostrils?” Is there treachery with the Holy One of

* Answerable to this was the doctrine of the primitive church: Η πιστις ιδιωροσεβειαι τον Θεου. Chrysost.

† Mic. vii. 18.

‡ Mic. vii. 19.

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Israel? Does the Lord make, and then violate his promise? “Ask now of the days that are past, ask from the one side of heaven unto the other, whether such a thing hath ever been?”

Ther. God has never violated his promise, when it was expressly made, and particularly applied.—But, in this circumstance, there is a wide difference between the case of your friend, and the case of his poor people. I named the object of my compassion in one of the instances, and made a personal application in the other. Neither of which is done in the scriptures.

Asp. Though we are not particularly named, yet we are very exactly described by our family, our inclination, our practice.—What says eternal Wisdom, when she makes a tender of her inestimable blessings? “To you, O men,” not to fallen angels, “I call; and my voice is,” not to this man or that man exclusively, but “to the sons of men” indefinitely.*—What says the holy apostle, when he publishes the counsels of heaven? “This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save”—the upright? the unblameable? Was this the case, our hopes would be covered with a cloud, or rather, totally and finally eclipsed. But see! they are clear as the light, and conspicuous as the noon-day. For he came (cheering, charming word!) he came to save “sinners.”†

Consonant to all which, is the declaration of another sacred envoy. He, the Prince of peace, the Monarch of the universe, suffered—for whom? They, in whose behalf this matchless ransom was paid, must have an undeniable right to look upon redemption as their own. And blessed, for ever-blessed be God, it is most peremptorily said, he suffered “for the unjust.”‡

That no part of our character might be omitted, and no sort of our misery pass unrelieved, it is farther declared, “When we were without strength, Christ

* Prov. viii. 4.

† 1 Tim. i. 15.

‡ 1 Pet. iii. 18.

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died for the ungodly.”* When we were ungodly, and considered only as ungodly creatures; neither possessed of any thing amiable, nor having the least ability to acquire it; nay, when we were chargeable with horrid guilt, and incapable of expiating a single offence; then, even then Christ died, and for such abominable wretches he died.—Are we not of the human family? Are we not unjust towards our fellow-creatures, † and ungodly towards our great Creator? Are we not, in all relations and in every respect, sinners? If we are, (and upon these questions, incredulity itself will scarcely demur,) let us not frowardly reject, rather let us thankfully receive those spiritual treasures, which, by virtue of the afore-cited conveyance, belong to such people; which, by several other clauses in the will and testament of our crucified Lord, evidently devolve to such persons.

Ther. Is it possible, Aspasio! Can we be warranted and encouraged to receive these treasures, in a capacity, and under a denomination, which I should think more likely to exclude us, disinherit us, and overthrow all our pretensions?

Asp. This may seem strange, but it is true. All the blessings of the gospel proceed upon a supposition of sinfulness. Christ is made wisdom unto his people: but what occasion for the accession of wisdom, unless it be in the case of ignorance and folly? Christ is made righteousness; but who can stand in need of a justifying righteousness, if they are not in themselves unprofitable and guilty? Christ is made sanctification; and does not this imply a state of corruption to be remedied, a body of sin to be destroyed? Christ is made redemption; and from what are persons redeemed, but from chains and bondage, from misery and ruin, and all manner of evil?

It is also a most precious and invaluable truth; such as I would hold fast, and never, never let go. When

* Rom. v. 6.

† He is unjust towards his neighbour, who neglects to love his neighbour as himself. And if this is the standard, who has not fallen short?

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I search for my own endowments, I find nothing that I dare venture to plead; being in my best moments, and amidst my choicest duties, a sinner. As this is, at all times, my undoubted character, I have at all times an undoubted warrant to say, the uncreated Wisdom calleth me; the blessed Jesus came to save me; the great Messiah suffered death for me.

Let me illustrate the point.—Romulus, you know, the founder of the Roman empire, was a poor prince; had but a handful of subjects, and very scanty territories. What expedient could he devise, to enlarge the boundaries of the one, and augment the number of the other? He issued a proclamation, addressed to the outlaws and criminals; all that were involved in debt, or obnoxious to punishment; promising, that as many as would settle under his dominions, should be secured from prosecution, and vested with considerable privileges.—We will suppose a person in those distressed circumstances. Upon hearing the welcome invitation, he hangs down his head, and with a dejected air cries, “I am a debtor, I am a criminal, and therefore unworthy of the royal protection.” What answer should he make to such a dispirited complainer? Make the same to yourself, whenever you are inclined to renew the present objections.—Remembering, that the infinite and eternal Sovereign, to display the magnificence of his majesty, and manifest the riches of his goodness, has commissioned his ambassadors to publish in every nation under heaven,—“That all unhappy sinners, who are oppressed by the devil, and liable to damnation, may come to Christ, and rely on Christ; may in this manner, obtain pardon, righteousness, and all the privileges of children.”

Ther. At this rate, the vilest miscreants have as clear, nay, have the very same warrant to believe in Christ, and receive his salvation, as the highest saints.

Asp. The very same. In this respect there is no difference. All have sinned, and must sue for spi-

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ritual blessings, not as deserving, but as guilty creatures; must receive them, not as the recompence of their own worth, but as the issues of infinite mercy.—The vilest miscreants are blinded by the devil, and enslaved to their lusts. Therefore they see no beauty in a Saviour, that they should desire him. Whereas, when the divine Spirit opens their eyes, and inclines their hearts, they discover and make use of just the same right to Christ and his merits, as the highest saints; a right founded, not on their awakened desires, not on any thing in themselves, but purely, solely, entirely on the free grant of a Saviour.

Should you ask the highest saints, on what their hopes are grounded? This, or something to this effect, would be their reply:—“On the free exhibition of Christ and his salvation, recorded in the word of truth. There we find it written, ‘To you,’ though Gentiles and idolaters, ‘is preached the remission of sins.’*—The promise is to you, even to you, whose wicked hands have crucified and slain the Lord of life; and not to you only, but to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God, by the message of his everlasting gospel, shall call.†—We remember, Theron, though you seem to have forgotten, the wretched outcast, polluted in his blood, yet accepted by the Holy One of Israel. We remember the heavenly gifts, received by the triumphant Redeemer, for enemies, and for the rebellious. Nor can we easily forget the promise of forgiveness which was made, and the blessing of forgiveness which was vouchsafed, even to the murderers of the Lord of glory.”‡

* Acts xiii. 38.

† Acts ii. 39. Call—in the same manner, as he called those to whom Peter spake: which evidently means, not the inward efficacious call, wrought by the Spirit; but the outward call, delivered in the word. Otherwise, we must suppose every individual person in this promiscuous assembly, to be savingly changed; which will hardly be credited by those, who remember, that the congregation consisted of mockers, murderers, and sinners.

‡ Referring to Dialogue XV.

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Ther. This is a pleasing supposition. But it would be more satisfactory, if you should produce any of the saints speaking in this manner.

Asp. Isaiah, you will allow, was a saint of no inferior rank. Yet he breathes the spirit I am describing, and acts the part I am vindicating. Turn to that epitome of the gospel, his fifty-third chapter. There you may observe him claiming a share in the greatest of all privileges, salvation through the blood of Christ. How does he advance and maintain his claim? Not in the capacity of a sanctified, but under the character of a sinful person. These are his words: "The Lord hath laid on him," on his Son Christ Jesus, "the iniquity of us all."* Of me, and of my brethren in piety, does he mean? No; but of me, and of my fellow-transgressors. This is evidently implied in the clause I have quoted. In the preceding part of the verse, the prophet explains himself, and leaves no room for hesitation. "All we, like sheep, have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way;" yet our transgressions, our iniquities, the God of all mercy has transferred from us, and charged upon our Redeemer.—As the vilest miscreants are indispensably obliged to confess the former, they have a free and full right to profess, to assert, and to believe the latter.

At this you may probably wonder; at this we ought all to wonder; this is that amazingly rich grace, which will be the wonder of saints and angels through a boundless eternity.—Yet, though we wonder, let us not murmur. Let not the elder brother repine, because the young prodigal enters at the same door, and is admitted to the same table with himself.

To this testimony of the saints, shall I add the decision of their King? "God so loved the world," even the fallen, the wicked, the apostate world, that, in the fulness of time, he gave his only begotten Son,† to bring in a perfect righteousness, and obtain eternal

* Isa. liiii. 6.

† John iii. 16.

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redemption. And he still gives him, with all his saving benefits, in the promise of the gospel.

Ther. Does this general gift warrant a sinner to make a particular application of all to himself?

Asp. It warrants, it demands, and in other instances obtains, a particular application. When Jonah, in pursuance of the divine command, cried and said, "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown;" here was no particular mention of man, woman, or child. Neither the king, nor the nobles, nor the commons, were specified. Much less was each and every inhabitant threatened by name. Nevertheless, this general denunciation alarmed them all; was influential on them all. Insomuch that "the people of Nineveh believed God, and proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them even to the least."* They believed; hence we learn the true nature of believing: "God speaks to me; and what he speaks, he will perform;" is its genuine profession. Hence we likewise discover, who they are which ought in this manner to apply the general word: "All, from the least even unto the greatest, believed."

Ther. The case is not parallel, *Aspasio*. This was a denunciation of vengeance, not a promise of grace.

Asp. And can you suppose, that God is more liberal of vengeance, than he is communicative of grace? Vengeance is his strange work, but in mercy and loving kindness he delighteth.—Are we bound to believe and apply his dreadful threatenings; not allowed to believe and apply his precious promises? Surely, the Lord's ways are not so unequal.—When the law says, "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things;"† should not every hearer take this to himself, and submit to the sentence of just condemnation? When the gospel says, "He came to save that which is lost;"‡ should not every hearer take this also to himself, and embrace the tender of free salvation?

However, if you dislike my instance, I will give

* Jonah iii. 5.

† Gal. iii. 10.

‡ Matt. xviii. 11.

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you another; which is not of the vindictive, but of the beneficent kind.—When the manna made its first appearance in the wilderness; when the Israelites knew neither what it was, nor for whom intended; both these particulars were explained by Moses: “This is the bread which the Lord hath given you to eat.”* No mention is made of any individual person. Yet the whole congregation looked upon this as an undoubted permission, both for themselves and their children, to gather, to fetch home, and to use the miraculous food.—And here, Theron, here lies the principal difference between the vile miscreant, and the exalted saint; not that the one was originally better than the other; not that the one has a clearer grant of Christ than the other; but the latter has gathered the heavenly manna, and uses it to his unspeakable advantage. Whereas it lies round the tents of the former; and whoever will may take, may eat, and his soul shall live.

Ther. God gave the manna to all the Israelites, both good and bad. But does he give Christ with this unlimited freeness?

Asp. Our Lord himself, alluding to this very miracle, vouchsafes you an answer; “My Father giveth you the true bread from heaven.”† My Father giveth you his incarnate Son, and his divinely-excellent righteousness. These are bread indeed; bread, which came down from the regions of heaven; and bread which nourisheth the soul for the joys of heaven.—This my Father giveth you; though not in actual possession, yet in right to possess. This he giveth you, in the free indefinite grant of his word: without which grant, any attempt to possess, even in the most upright of men, would be illegal and presumptuous: by virtue of which grant, even the poor sinner has an unquestionable warrant to receive and possess the riches of Christ.

Ther. Unquestionable! is not this expression too

* Exod. xvii. 15.

† John vi. 31.

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peremptory? That such a grant should be made to believers, I can easily conceive. But is it made to sinners,—to any sinners, to the most abandoned sinners?

Asp. Yes, Theron, to sinners. And when sinners receive the grant, then they commence believers.—Was it made to believers only, no man living would inherit the blessing: because all men are, by the depravity and impotence of their nature, originally concluded under sin and unbelief.

What said our Lord? My Father giveth you; that is, the people who stood around, and heard his gracious voice; many of whom were in a carnal state habitually, and even then were in a murmuring wicked frame.*—What says the prophet? To us a Son is given: not to us, who were antecedently children of the light; but who “walked in darkness, and dwelt in the shadow of death.”†—What saith God the Lord? he that created the heavens, and stretched them out? “I will give thee,” meaning his beloved Son, “for a covenant;” it is not said, of believers, but “of the people;” it is not said, of new creatures, but “of the Gentiles;” who were the vilest of all creatures, or, as you have properly spoke, the most abandoned sinners.—That we may understand more clearly the signification of these terms, and see the true extent of this gift, it is added, I will give thee “to open the blind eyes, and to bring out the prisoners from the prison.”‡ Miserable and guilty wretches, blinded by the devil, and enslaved to their lusts; these are patentees in the heavenly grant. To these the great Surety is given, together with all the benefits of his covenant.

Here then the grant and the gift are mentioned; the persons for whom they are designed, are specified, and expressly named. They are sinners; blinded and enslaved sinners; or, if there be any other more obnoxious sort, they are all comprehended in this one

* John vi. 32, 41.

† Isa. ix. 2, 9.

‡ Isa. lxiii. 6, 7.

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word, Gentiles.—Only allow these texts to be true; only allow the divine Speaker to be sincere and faithful; then we may boldly affirm, that any, that every poor sinner, is authorized to say, “God gives me his Son, to be my covenant-surety. I take him at his word. The Surety and all his merits are mine.”—Divinely-rich bounty! O let us not refuse what, on this consideration, the unerring Spirit calls “our own mercy.”* Let us adore the beneficence of our God; let us believe his promising word; and, in this sweet, this easy manner, obtain both present and final salvation.

Ther. Let me recollect:—Christ is given for the world, the apostate world, to believe on:—Christ has died, not for the righteous, but for the ungodly:—Christ came in the flesh to save sinners, even the chief of sinners.—Well; Aspasio, if these things are true, (and how can they be otherwise? since they are the express doctrine of the scripture,) it is pity but they were more generally known. For my part, I must confess, they are not only new but strange to me. Though I have read them in the Bible, yet when I come to consider them, and compare them with what passes in my breast, I find they are quite contrary to my usual way of thinking.

Asp. You remind me of a valuable person, whom I once numbered among my acquaintance, and whose way of thinking was somewhat similar to your own. Will you give me leave to relate his case?

Ther. Most gladly. It will be some kind of consolation to hear, that others have laboured under the same difficulties with myself, and been subject to the same distresses. If I am informed of their deliverance from those distresses, it will be like shewing me an opened door for effecting my own escape. If I am likewise acquainted with the manner of their deliverance, this will furnish me with a clue to guide my steps.

* Jonah ii. 7.

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Asp. This person was roused from a habit of indolence and supineness, into a serious concern for his eternal welfare. Convinced of his depraved nature and aggravated guilt, he had recourse to the scriptures, and to frequent prayer. He attended the ordinances of christianity, and sought earnestly for an assured interest in Christ; but found no stedfast faith, and tasted very little comfort. At length, he applied to an eminent divine, and laid open the state of his heart. Short, but weighty, was the answer he received. "I perceive, Sir, the cause of your distress. You do not, you will not, come to Christ as a sinner. This mistake stands between your soul and the joy of religion. This detains you in the gall of bitterness; and take heed, O! take heed, lest it consign you over to the bond of iniquity!" This admonition never departed from the gentleman's mind; and it became the happy means of removing the obstruction to his peace.

Remember this little history, Theron; and may it prove as efficacious for your good, as it is pertinent to your circumstances? Remember, that the free grant of Christ, made in the word of truth, and addressed to sinners of mankind, is the only basis and ground-work of faith. An apostle, after all the labours of his exemplary life, can have no better. And a Magdalene and a Manasseh, as a motive and encouragement for their turning unto the Lord, have the very same.

But we digress from the principal subject. Since you disapprove my account of faith, I must desire you to favour me with a description, more correct and unexceptionable. For, as you justly observed, this is a very momentous article.—Is not Christ the source of all spiritual good, and faith the main channel of conveyance? Surely then it should be made and kept as clear as possible.—Is not Christ the foundation of all true godliness, and faith the master-arch in this sacred structure? Surely then it should be raised and turned with the utmost care.

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Ther. Palæmon's account is this:—Faith, he says, is a firm persuasion, that Jesus Christ has shed his blood, and fulfilled all righteousness; has sustained the punishment due to sin; and obtained full reconciliation with God: that all this grace, and each of these benefits, are free; for you, for me, for others. In consequence of this persuasion, the sinner flies to Christ, comes to Christ, and trusts in Christ for his own salvation.

Asp. I have the highest regard for Palæmon's judgment; and I cannot but think my opinion is confirmed even by his.—The act of flying to Christ, is an appropriating act. It implies an intention to get out of danger; it implies a discovery of Christ as the appointed safety; and consists in making use of him as such. How can this be done, but by a persuasion that he is mine; that his sufferings were in my stead, and that his death is my safeguard?—What is meant by coming to Christ, we may learn from Jeremiah. "Behold! we come unto thee, for thou art the Lord our God."* Coming, you see, includes a real persuasion, that the Lord is our God. While we are wholly destitute of this persuasion, we stand at a distance, and our souls are afar off. We are never brought nigh; we never come in the prophet's sense; till we are brought to say, each one for himself, "Thou art the Lord my God."—The act of trusting in Christ is much of the same nature. It presupposes, that Christ is the trustee of the covenant of grace; it proceeds upon a conviction of his faithfulness in executing the office; and it is a solemn surrender or giving up the whole affair of our salvation into his hand; giving it up, not in uncertainty of success, (this would be mistrusting, rather than trusting,) but with a certainty, in some measure, suitable to the fidelity and ability of him with whom we have to do.

If you are still doubtful, whether any such persuasion is implied in trusting, let us choose a referee.

* Jer. iii. 22.

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Let us carry our controversy to the king of Israel. Inquire of David, why he trusts in the Lord, and what he means by trusting? To both these inquiries he answers distinctly and fully: "The Lord is my high tower, my shield, and he in whom I trust."* 'He is—he is my shield;—of this I am persuaded, and therefore I trust in him.'

Ther. You change it for a more softened, not for a more intelligible term. I must desire to know, what you mean by the word appropriation?

Asp. To appropriate, in the theological sense, is to take home the grace of God, which lies in the common indefinite grant of the gospel. Is Christ the treasure hid in the field? To appropriate this treasure, is to receive and use it as our own portion. Is Christ the balm of Gilead, full of saving health? To appropriate this balm, is to take and apply it for the recovery of our own souls. And without such an appropriation, how can we either be enriched by the former, or healed by the latter?

Let me farther explain my meaning, and exemplify the position, by considering Christ in his several offices. Christ, as a priest, is made to guilty creatures, righteousness. When we appropriate the grace of our High Priest, this is the language of our hearts, "In the Lord have I righteousness."†—Christ, as a prophet, is made to ignorant creatures, wisdom.—When we appropriate the benefits of our unerring Prophet, this is the persuasion of our souls, "Though I sit in darkness, the Lord will be a light unto me."‡—Christ, as a king, is made unto depraved creatures, sanctification. When we appropriate the munificence of our almighty King, this is our comfortable trust, "The Lord will deliver me from every evil work."§

This is what I mean by appropriation.—That something of this kind is included in the essence of faith,

* Psa. cxliv. 2.

† Mic. vii. 8.

‡ Isa. xlv. 24.

§ Tim. iv. 18.

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is the sentiment I would maintain.—Which sentiment might be confirmed, if such confirmation were demanded, by a multitude of the most illustrious witnesses:—witnesses so illustrious, that they were a blessing to the world, and an honour to human nature; so numerous, that, without giving an abstract of their testimonies, it might seem tedious only to recite their names.*

Ther. I will dispense with the recital of their names, only let me have a specimen of their testimonies.

Asp. First, then, let me present you with Dr. Owen; than whom England has produced few writers, either more judicious or more devout. “Faith,” he tells us in his catechism, “is a gracious resting upon the free promises of God in Jesus Christ for mercy, with a firm persuasion of heart, that God is a reconciled Father to us in the Son of his love.”—Next let me introduce the learned and justly celebrated Altingius, pro-

* If the reader should inquire after their names, he will find some of them enumerated in the following catalogue. Luther, Calvin, Melancthon, Beza, Bullinger, Bucer, Knox, Craig, Melvil, Brace, Davidson, Forbes, &c.—Ursinus, Zanchius, Junius, Piscator, Rollock, Danaeus, Wendelinus, Chamierus, Sharpus, Bodiús, Parens, Altingius, Triglandii (Gisbertus and Jacobus,) Arnoldus, Maresius; the four professors at Leyden, Wallans, Rivetus, Polyander, Thysis; Wollebius, Heidegerus, Essenius; Turretinus, &c.—Many eminent British divines, Bishop Babington, Davenant, Hall, Perkins, Pemble, Willet, Gouge, Rogers, Burgess, Owen, Marshall, &c.

If we were apparently and demonstrably in an error, yet, to err with such company, and in the footsteps of such guides, must very much tend to mitigate the severity of censure. But, I believe, few serious persons will venture to charge error and delusion upon such a venerable body of protestant divines; so eminent for their learning, and so exemplary for their holiness; whose labours were so remarkably owned by God, and whose sentiments, on this particular subject, have been adopted by so many reformed churches.—The declarations of the English and the Palatine churches are produced in the dialogue. I have in my hand an extract from the confessions and standard doctrines of the church—of Scotland—of Ireland—of France—of Helvetia. With all which Aspasio has the happiness to agree. Only some of them are much stronger in displaying and maintaining the special fiducia, or the appropriating persuasion of faith. To quote them, would dignify and strengthen the cause. But, to avoid prolixity, I forego this advantage.

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fessor of divinity at Heidelberg. "Faith," he says, "is a knowledge of the grace of God in Christ, together with a fiduciary reliance on it, or an application of it to a man's own self."—To these let me add the unanimous suffrage of the churches of the Palatinate. It is asked, in the twenty-first question of their public catechism: "What is true faith?" To which this answer is returned: It is not only an assent to all the truths which God has revealed in his word; but it is an assured trust, wrought by the Holy Spirit in my heart, that remission of sins, complete righteousness, and eternal life, are given; freely given, not to others only, but to myself; and all this, from the mere mercy of God, through the alone merits of Christ."

These testimonies are but as the tithe to the whole crop. Yet these are more than enough to exempt me from the charge of singularity. You will not wonder, therefore, if I still abide by the good old protestant doctrine, which was espoused by so many of the ablest judges; which was the darling tenet of almost all our reformers; which has been so signally instrumental in demolishing the superstitions of popery; and is so evidently conducive to the holiness and happiness of christians.—Especially, as I apprehend the determinations of scripture, and the experience of scriptural saints, are all on my side.

Ther. You have now brought the cause to the proper bar. When a question so important is debated, and an interest so momentous is concerned, I cannot acquiesce in any authority less than divine. I cannot, and indeed I think we ought not. Nothing should satisfy us on such an occasion, but the word, which is unerring and decisive; the word, by which we are to stand or fall eternally. Whence does it appear, that the determinations of this divine word are on your side?

Asp. From the noblest description of faith, which language itself can form. The writer to the Hebrews, having mentioned the life of faith, the perseverance of faith, and the end and reward of faith, proceeds to

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a definition of this leading grace. “Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.”*—The evidence, exhibiting not a faint surmise, but a clear demonstration, both of invisible blessings, and of our right to enjoy them.—The substance, realizing what is promised; and giving us, as it were; a possession of good things that are remote, a present possession of good things that are future.

Ther. What are those blessings, and these good things?

Asp. I will inform my Theron; and in such manner, from such passages, as shall farther ascertain my representation of faith.—What says the apostle of the Gentiles? “I preached unto you the gospel.”†—And what is the substance of this evangelical dispensation? “Christ died for our sins.”‡—That so exalted a person as the Son of God, and Lord of glory; should die, is wonderful!—That he should die for sins, the most abominable objects, and for sinners, the most detestable creatures, is abundantly more wonderful!—That he should die, not for sins in general, but for our sins in particular, this is inexpressibly wonderful, and at the same time inexpressibly comfortable. Here we have the gospel, and its capital blessing, expressed in this proposition, “Christ died for sins.” Here we have faith and its principal acting, expressed in this proposition, “Christ died for our sins.” Till the former is preached, the doctrine is not gospel; till the latter is believed, it should seem from St. Paul’s account, the conviction is not faith.

Let me produce another instance, extracted, like the preceding, from the rolls of heaven. “This is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life;”§ not proposed it, on I know what conditions, but hath given freely and fully, without any reserve, and with

* Heb. xi. 1.

† 1 Cor. xv. 3.

‡ 1 Cor. xv. 1.

§ 1 John v. 2.

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a liberality suited to his inconceivable goodness, hath given the richest of all prizes; and not to some only, or to others, but to us, even to us.

Ther. Us, that is, the apostles and exalted saints.

Asp. Was eternal life given them because they were apostles? No, verily; but because Christ died for them.—Did Christ die for them, because they were exalted saints? In no wise; but because they were miserable sinners.—Eternal life was purchased for them, when they were sinners. It was consigned over to them, when they were sinners. And neither the purchase, nor the gift, were founded on their being saints, but aimed at making them so.

That “Christ died for our sins;” that “God hath given to us eternal life:” these are the blessings of which faith is the evidence; these are the good things of which faith is the substance. This is the honey in the evangelical hive; and I am at a loss to conceive, how we can taste the honey, without some appropriation of the good things to ourselves.—This, if I mistake not, is comprehended in all those figurative descriptions of faith, which occur in holy writ.

Ther. Favour me with some of those descriptions. I begin to see a peculiar beauty, and an unequalled richness, in the figures of scripture. Nothing yields me more refined pleasure, than to investigate and discover the exact sense of those instructive images. It is somewhat like kindling the consecrated incense; which, when rising in a flame, diffused light; when spreading in clouds of fragrance, distributed refreshment.

Asp. Faith is styled, “a looking unto Jesus.” But if we do not look unto Jesus, as the propitiation of our sins, what comfort or what benefit can we derive from the sight?—A “receiving of Christ.” But can I have pretence to receive him, or take possession of his merits, unless I am convinced, that they are intended for me? This is what neither the dictates of conscience will allow, nor the laws of reason authorize.—

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“A resting upon Christ.”* But how can we rest on a surety, if he has not interposed in our behalf; or how confide in a payment, which we believe to be made for others, not for ourselves?—Surely, Theron, when I rest upon an object, I use it as my support. When I receive a gift, I take it as my own property. And when the Israelites looked unto the the brazen serpent, they certainly regarded it as a remedy, each particular person for himself.

Ther. To cast ourselves upon Christ, as an all-sufficient Saviour; and rely on him, for our whole salvation; is not this real faith? This is what I heard, some time ago, from a celebrated pulpit.

Asp. If you rely on the all-sufficiency of his will, as well as of his power; if you take the comfort, and appropriate the benefit resulting from both; you practise the very thing I recommend. This is what was taught from the pulpit of infallibility; and by those first of preachers, who spake as the Holy Ghost gave them utterance. Let the convinced sinner, and the afflicted soul, “trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God.” Let him not only reverence Christ, as the incarnate God, and therefore mighty to save; but look upon Christ as his God, and therefore willing to save. Thus let him “lean upon the Rock”† of ages, without indulging a doubt, concerning his right to make use of it, or the possibility of its failing him.

To “cast ourselves upon Christ;” to “cast our burden,” or to “cast all our care† upon the Lord;” are metaphors, which may receive some elucidation from an incident recorded in the Acts. When the mariners and passengers, which sailed with St. Paul, saw their

* I find two words in the original, which express the privilege and the duty of resting on Christ. ⲓⲛ, which implies such a state of acquiescence, as silences the clamours of conscience, and composes the perturbation of the spirit. ⲛⲓⲛⲓⲛⲓⲛ, which signifies the refreshment and repose of a weary pilgrim, when he arrives at the end of his journey, and is settled for life in a secure, commodious, plentiful habitation. Psa. xxxvii. 7. Isa. xxviii. 12.

† ⲓⲛⲓ Isa. l. 10.

‡ ⲉⲡⲓⲣⲣⲓⲫⲁⲛⲓⲛⲉⲥ, 1 Pet. v. 7.

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vessel shattered; saw the waves prevailing; saw no hopes of safety from continuing in the ship; they cast themselves* upon the floating planks. They cast themselves upon the planks without any scruple, not questioning their right to make use of them; and they clave to those supporters with a cheerful confidence, not doubting but, according to the apostle's promise, they should escape safe to land.—Be this what people mean, when they speak of venturing or casting themselves upon Christ, and I approve the expression, I subscribe the doctrine. It speaks what I wish for my friend, for myself, and for my fellow-sinners.

Let us shift our situation, and view the point in another light. Consider the blessed and glorious object of our faith. Christ is represented by the similitude of bread, heavenly bread for the hungry soul. Faith is characterized by eating the food. And can this be done without a personal application?—Christ is held forth under the image of living waters, ever running, and always free for the thirsty appetite. But let them run ever so copiously, let them be presented ever so freely, all this will neither quench the thirst, nor refresh the spirits, unless they are drank. To do this is the business of faith.—Christ is described as a garment, to accommodate destitute, and beautify deformed creatures. Faith is expressed by putting on this commodious garment, and wearing this beautiful robe. And can any idea, or any expression, more strongly denote an actual appropriation?

Ther. It is evident, that many holy people, in former ages, were not possessed of assurance.—What is the language of David? It is all despondency. “I am cast out of the sight of thine eyes.”—To the same melancholy tune is the harp of Asaph strung, “Is his mercy clean gone for ever? doth his promise fail for evermore?”—The same jealous and distrustful air breathes in the complaint of the church. “The Lord hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me.”—

* *Ἀπορριψάντες*, Acts xxvii. 48.

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Why then should my Aspasio set up a rule stricter and higher than those eminent saints attained?

Asp. You would rather ask, Why have the best judges, and the most exemplary christians, in their several writings, set up this rule?—Why have the apostles of our Lord, and the Spirit of our God, speaking in the Bible, set up this rule?—To which I might reply, Because it is, of all precepts, the most beneficial.—Therefore they have not so much set it up under the notion of a strict rule, as they have set it forth under the character of a choice blessing.

Your complaint, when put into its proper language, seems to run thus: “Why must we be obliged to trust in Christ alone? Why must we be obliged to assure ourselves of salvation by him?”—Whereas, instead of a complaint, it should be matter of exultation, and we should rather express ourselves in this manner: “Bless the Lord, O my soul, that a sinner, such a vile sinner, should be allowed to take Christ and all his salvation as my own; and thus to assure myself of pardon, holiness, and glory.”

This blessing was certainly enjoyed by the holy men of old; but, like every other species of felicity in this world, it was enjoyed after an imperfect manner.—They had an assured persuasion of God’s present favour, and of their own final happiness. Nevertheless, this assured persuasion was liable to the assaults, both of outward temptations, and of inward corruptions; which might, for a while, impair its vigour, though not destroy its being. As under a transient swoon, the spirits fail, the colour departs, but the vital principle subsists.

You may farther observe, concerning those pious persons, that, when they cease to exercise this confidence of faith, they lament the failure: “I said, This is my infirmity.”*—They chide themselves for it; “Why art thou cast down, O my soul?”—They encourage themselves against it; “Hope in God,”† it is

* Psa. lxxvii. 10.

† Psa. xlii. 5.

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thy unquestionable privilege.—How could they do this? on what grounds, or from what motive? if they had not a secret persuasion, that their ransom was paid, and their God reconciled; consequently, that all their doubts were an injury to his fidelity and to his goodness.

Nay, the church, even under her darkest apprehensions, still speaks the sentiment, still retains the grace for which I am pleading. “My Lord,” uttered with her lips, argues an applicatory faith in her heart.—So copious and pregnant are the evidences of this precious doctrine! It is confirmed by that very passage, which was produced for its confutation.

Ther. If this be the sentiment of the church in general, is it also the temper of her particular members? Was each of them animated by this firm and lively faith?

Asp. Let these particular persons appear, and answer for themselves.—Hear the declaration of the psalmist: “Bless the Lord, O my soul; and all that is within me, bless his holy name?”* What is the cause of his holy transport, and devout praise? Is it, because God possibly may, because he probably will? No; but because he actually does forgive; “Who forgiveth all thine iniquities.”—Take notice of Job’s belief, and Job’s support, amidst his unexampled sufferings: “I know that my Redeemer liveth;” not only that there is a Redeemer, but that he is, together with all his saving benefits, mine: which, being a truth so sweet and delightful, is expressed a second time; “whom I shall see for myself,”† to my own advantage, and for my own comfort: see him exerting his almighty power and infinite mercy, to rescue my body from the grave, and to deliver my soul from hell.—What was Habakkuk’s security, amidst the threatening, the tremendous, the triumphant malice of his own, and his country’s enemies? “The Lord God is my strength.” He says not, I wish, I pray

* Psa. ciii. 1, 8.

† Job xix. 25, 27.

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for the divine favour and succour; but I am persuaded, they both are mine; my inestimable portion, and my inviolable safeguard. “He will make my feet like hinds’ feet, that I shall perfectly escape from all danger; and he will make me walk upon mine high places, beyond the reach of every evil.”*

Ther. Is this the language of believers under the New Testament dispensation?

Asp. Under every dispensation, Theron.—They who lived before the law, “were persuaded”† of the promises; had not the least distrust, with regard to the certainty of their performance: nay, they “embraced them”‡ as their own, they hugged them, as it were, to their very souls.—They who lived under the law could say, “As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us.§—And can you imagine, in the days of the gospel, when our advantages are greater, and our light is clearer, that our faith should be weaker, or our hope fainter? St. Peter makes a profession, which excludes all doubting; “I am a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed.”|| St. Paul answers in the same heroic strain, “I know in whom I have believed; and I am persuaded, that neither life, nor death, nor any creature, shall be able to separate me from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus my Lord,”¶ With both which, the confession of faith recorded by St. Luke, is exactly correspondent; “We believe, that, through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, we shall be saved even as they.”**

Ther. Was not this a privilege peculiar to the apostles?

Asp. By no means. All believers are brethren, and have “like precious faith.”—Hear how St. Peter exhorts all his people; “Gird up the loins of your mind,

* Hab. iii. 19.

† Πεισθηδεις. Heb. xi. 13.

‡ Ασπασαμενον.

§ Psa. ciii. 12.

|| Pet. v. 1.

¶ Rom. viii. 29.

** Acts xv. 11.

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and hope to the end;" or, as the word should rather be translated, hope perfectly, hope assuredly, "for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ."* Maintain, not a dim, but a bright hope; not a wavering, but a steady expectation, of eternal life; that free, but grand gift, of which the Lord Jesus, at his second coming, shall put you in full possession.—The apostle, writing to his Hebrew converts, encourages them all to "hold fast the confidence, and the rejoicing of their hope, firm unto the end."† From whence it is deducible, that a trust amounting to confidence, and the joy which naturally results from such a trust, were the common portion of christians; possessed, not barely by some few exalted saints, but by the followers of Jesus in general.—I might bring many more instances. But why should I multiply proofs? since the beloved disciple declares, "These things have I written unto you, that believe on the name of the Son of God, that ye may know that ye have eternal life."

Ther. True, Aspasio. This coincides with my apprehensions. The scriptures are written, first, that we may believe, and be entitled to eternal life,—next, that we may have the knowledge of our belief, and a consciousness of our title. The apostle supposes his correspondents to possess the former, yet not to have attained the latter.

Asp. Is it certain, that he makes such a supposition? He writes, I imagine, not with a view of leading them to either, but of confirming them in both.—He intimates that the privilege and the comfort should go together. If we believe that Christ is our Surety; we should be persuaded, that he has paid our debt, and satisfied justice to the very uttermost farthing. If

* 1 Pet. i. 13. Εἰς τέλος, or μέχρι τέλος, signify to the end. But τελως, as far as I can recollect, is never used in this sense, either by sacred or profane writers. It may be rendered perfecte, integre, in this connexion, cum firma fiducia, with a firm alliance.

† Heb. iii. 6.

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we believe that Christ is our bridegroom; we should rest assured, that his righteousness, his inheritance, and his kingdom, are ours. And why should we take pains to separate, what God's word, and the nature of things, have united? Will this turn to our advantage? must it not issue in our loss?—Besides, according to your own interpretation, whoever falls short of this cheering knowledge, falls short of one great end for which the scriptures were written. He receives not his full reward. He only gleans, where he might reap; is tossed on the ocean of uncertainty: whereas “they that have believed,” have gained the port, have dropped their anchor, and “entered into rest.”*

Ther. Believed! What? that our sins are laid upon Christ; that he was obedient in our stead; that all spiritual blessings are thereby procured for our—even our enjoyment?

Asp. The blessings you mention, are evidently the purport of the gospel. And I know of no other justifying faith, but that which relates to the gospel, and believes its report.† Nor can I think, that any other belief will administer the tranquillity, or produce the rest, specified by the apostle.—But here, I find, lies the core and root of our controversy. This is the precise point to be settled: What is it to believe? what is included in this very important word?—This question might renew our dispute, and cause the past arguments to recur. Whereas, I would gladly get rid of disputation. We have already been too long detained in these disagreeable paths. However, since you have given the occasion, I must touch upon another text or two. For I would willingly drive this nail to the head, and not leave my friend unconvinced, on a subject of the utmost consequence.

The Lord declares by his prophet, “I, even I, am he that blottereth out thy transgressions.” To believe, is to subscribe this declaration; to subscribe with our hand, and profess from our heart, “Lord, it is done

* Heb. iv. 3.

† Isa. liii. 1.

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as thou hast said.”—Faith is, if I may so speak, the echo of the divine voice. It eagerly catches, and punctually reverberates the joyful sound. Does God say, “Thou art my people?” Faith replies, “Thou art my God:”* not barely desiring, but confidently averring, an interest in his favour. This explanation of faith is given us by a wisdom which cannot be deceived, by a fidelity which cannot deceive.—Once more. Our Lord bears this testimony concerning Thomas; “Thomas, thou hast believed.” Now then, I think, we have got an infallible touchstone. Let us examine, what that is which Jesus Christ calls believing. Whatever it be, it is the determination of truth itself; and should pass for a verdict, from which there lies no appeal. And this is the confession of Thomas, “My Lord, and my God.”† This, this expresses what our divine Master calls believing. When, therefore, we confess with our lips, and are persuaded in our hearts, that “Jesus is our Lord,” who bought us with his blood; that “Jesus is our God,” who will exert all his adorable perfections for our good; then we truly believe. We believe, in our Saviour’s sense of the word; we have that faith, which he allows to be genuine.

Ther. Is this the constant language of faith? According to this account, there is no difference between the infant and the adult; between the new-born babe, and the full-grown man in Christ. Your spiritual children, Aspasio, must be men from their birth; nay, born in all the vigour of manhood. Whereas, the apostle makes an evident difference between the babes, the young men, and the fathers; between faith, and the full assurance of faith. If we are told of a patriarch, who was “strong in faith;” we read of some Roman converts, who were “weak in the faith;” and we hear our Lord speaking to disciples, who were “fearful and of little faith.”

Asp. Between faith, and the full assurance of faith,

* Hos. ii. 23.

† John xx. 28, 29.

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the apostle makes a difference. The one is the most exalted pitch, where the other is but an inferior elevation. Yet both are rounds of the same ladder.—I don't remember; that the sacred writer any where distinguishes between faith and assurance. ΠΙΣΤΙΣ and ΠΕΠΟΙΘΗΣΙΣ, faith and confidence, are joined in the epistle to the Ephesians. It is the opinion of the best critics, that the sense of the latter is included in the former. The critic's opinion is confirmed by the apostle's declaration, "We have access with confidence through faith."* Could yonder sun diffuse warmth through the air, if it had no warmth in itself? No more could faith produce confidence in the believer, if, in its own nature, it did not contain the same.

The case of little faith, I think, may be explained from our Lord's own expostulation: "O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?" Here was a faith, not only in Christ's power, but also in his will. Nay, here was an appropriating faith, by which the apostle applied both to himself.—"I verily believe that my divine Master is able to preserve me, even though I venture to tread upon this tempestous sea. I am persuaded likewise, that he will uphold me, and not suffer his servant to perish in the hazardous enterprise." Nothing less than this could have produced that hazardous enterprise, or have emboldened him to walk upon the rolling billows.

Do you not discern, in this instance, some degree of personal application, some real assurance of faith? 'Tis true, this faith was violently assaulted by doubts, and greatly enfeebled by fears.† Yet still it was of

* Eph. iii. 12.

† I must beg the candid reader, to take particular notice of this limitation; and must intreat the impartial examiner, not to forget this concession. We no where suppose, that a freedom from all fears, or a superiority to all doubts, are included in the nature of faith. We only affirm, that an appropriating persuasion or assurance are necessary to the being of faith. This assurance may be encumbered with doubts, and may conflict with fears. But still it is assurance,—real assurance,—and proves itself to be such, by opposing and struggling with the contrary principle.

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the applicatory kind. He can, he will, were expressive of its nature; though the boisterous winds, and the terrifying appearance of things, almost drowned its voice, or stifled the words in their utterance.

Ther. If you allow no difference between faith and confidence, I am very sure, St. John puts a difference between babes, young men, and fathers.

Asp. He does, Theron; and so would I. Neither can I think of any thing more proper to explain my meaning, or establish my tenet, than your own comparison.—In some fruitful family, you may see one child in leading-strings; another able to walk by itself; a third coming home, improved and cultivated, from the school of literature. Observe their speech. One lisps out a few broken sentences; another talks intelligibly, but very incorrectly; the last has learned to express himself with tolerable propriety. Yet each speaks the same language, notwithstanding the various degrees of fluency in their utterance, or purity in their diction.—So faith always speaks one and the same uniform language. Whether she lisps or stammers; whether she whispers in faint accents, or raises her voice in a more manly tone; this is still the unvaried import of her speech, “God, even our own God, will give us his blessing.”—Can you forget, how St. John addresses even his little children? “I write unto you, little children, because your sins are forgiven.”*

Ther. Will not this account discourage some, and offend others, who are not at such an exalted pitch?

Asp. I would not offend the meanest, nor discourage the weakest of my Redeemer’s servants.—As for offence, that cannot be given, and ought not to be taken, when all we advance is strictly conformable to the unerring oracles. Whereas, to qualify and attenuate the scriptural descriptions of faith, in complaisance to our own experience; to make the unhappy fluctuations and unworthy suspicions, which possess

* 1 John ii. 12.

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the breasts of some particular christians,—to make these the rule of explaining, or the measure of enforcing so capital a duty; this, sure, would be an offence to God, an injury to his word, and detrimental to the welfare of souls.

With regard to discouragement, I cannot conceive how this should ensue, from informing the poor sinner that he has a right to apply Christ, and all Christ's merits, to himself; or from exhorting the poor sinner to do this, without any hesitation, and with a resolute dependence. In this case, to doubt is to be discouraged: as much as you want certainty, so much you want consolation. The proper way to comfort these distressed people, is, not to allow but to dissipate their doubts; to blow away those dead ashes, that the smothered embers may shine and glow.

Were we to enquire after the cause of that disquietude and despondency which are so common among modern professors, I am inclined to suspect, we should find it lying hid in their wrong apprehensions both of Christ and of faith. They look upon Christ as a rigorous and forbidding monarch, who insists upon some hard terms and high qualifications.—Whereas, his heart and his arms are ever open: his heart as open, as infinite love can set it; his arms as open, as infinite merit can make them. They look upon faith, as containing a possibility only, or at most a probability of salvation through his name. It is with them a kind of peradventure; a situation of mind fluctuating and pendulous. “Perhaps I may succeed, and be eternally blessed. Perhaps I may be rejected, and eternally ruined.” Such a state of suspense, in an affair of everlasting consequence, cannot but create uneasiness and anxiety.

This uneasiness and anxiety seem to have been little known in the early and better days of the church. And why? Because christians were then exposed to the rage of persecution? Because they were placed nearer the time of Christ's sojourning on earth?—I ra-

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ther think, because they were taught this particular and comfortable application of Christ and his righteousness. They exercised a confident affiance on Jesus, as their own Redeemer; and were shewn a more direct way to obtain this assurance, than merely to search after their own renewed qualities.

Ther. Surely, Aspasio, in this particular you differ, not from me only, but from the generality of the orthodox.

Asp. I am sorry to find myself under a necessity of differing from any worthy persons, much more of disagreeing with the generality. This I can safely aver, that it is not from an affectation of novelty, or any fondness for disputing, but from a disinterested regard to the truth of the gospel. I should be glad to have the concurrence of all the serious, and all the pious. But I dare not purchase their approbation, I dare not attempt a coalition of sentiments, by diminishing the boundless riches of grace, or restricting the absolute freeness of salvation by Christ.

You are pleased to remind me of the orthodox. Pray, my dear friend, what is the standard of orthodoxy?—Is it the word of revelation? This speaks once, yea twice, nay some hundreds of times in our favour.—Is it the doctrine of our reformers from popery? With these we jar not, but exactly harmonize. Is it to be taken from the old confessions of faith, and the catechisms of protestant churches? To these we appeal, and have the sanction of their authority.—Has the modern way of treating and stating this momentous subject so much to allege for its support?

Let me farther ask, Are we better than our fathers? Is christianity in a thriving condition, or practical religion on the advancing hand? The reverse, the melancholy reverse, is undeniably true.—When our writers enforced, and our preachers urged, what I am defending, professors were alive, and animated with the power of godliness. Whereas now we seem to be degenerated into the mere form; we “have a name to

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live, but are" languid, listless, and if not "dead,"* yet ready to die.—It behoves us therefore to consider, whether the declension, the decays, the unfruitfulness, so justly lamented in the present age, be not owing to the absence of this appropriating belief, or this assured persuasion.

A sweet assurance of pardon, a comfortable persuasion of our reconciliation with God, an established hope of eternal glory through Jesus Christ; these will be operative in the soul, as "a torch in the sheaf." These will enkindle love, and increase watchfulness; these will beget true humility of mind, and work an unfeigned abhorrence of sin; these will enlarge the heart with charity, and exalt the affections above the world. These are the proper, and the only effectual means of "making the man of God perfect," that is, "thoroughly furnished to every good work."†

But the doubting frame is not fitted to yield any of these fruits. Nay, I am apprehensive, there are several

* Rev. iii. 1.

† For the display and confirmation of these points, I do, with great pleasure, and without any diffidence, refer to Mr. Marshall's Gospel-Mystery of Sanctification. Which I shall not recommend in the style of a critic, or like a reader of taste, but with all the simplicity of the weakest christian; I mean from my own experience. It has been made one of the most useful books to my own soul. I scarce ever fail to receive spiritual consolation and strength from the perusal of it. And was I to be banished into some desolate island, possessed only of two books besides my Bible, this should be one of the two, and perhaps the first that I would chuse.

Should any person, hitherto a stranger to the work, purchase it on this recommendation, I must desire to suggest one caution:—That he be not surprised, if, in the beginning, he meets with something new, and quite out of the common road: or, if surprised, that he would not be offended, but calmly and attentively proceed. He will find the author's design opening itself by degrees. He will discern more and more the propriety of his method: and what might, at the first view, appear like a stumbling-block, will prove to be a fair, compendious, and ample avenue—to the palace of truth,—to the temple of holiness,—and to the bowers of happiness.—Our author's particular recommendation of this invaluable book, in a preface to an edition of it printed in London, will be inserted in the fifth volume of this edition.

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graces, which can hardly be exercised, several duties, which can scarcely be performed, so long as this spirit of diffidence prevails.

Ther. Name them, Aspasio.

Asp. I am afraid, lest I should seem to arrogate the office of a teacher; which neither becomes my condition, nor is agreeable to my temper.

Ther. I beseech you, my dear friend, let us wave ceremony, and have nothing to do with compliments. My soul is in jeopardy. My present comfort and my everlasting happiness are at stake. And shall we suffer any little punctilios to overbear such weighty considerations?

Suppose you are a teacher; I have great need, and am very desirous, to become your scholar. For I freely confess, that, knowing as I may seem in other instances, I am very ignorant in the great peculiarities of the gospel. Nay, though I have read the scriptures in a critical view, I have been an utter stranger to their spiritual meaning. Here I am uninstructed as a babe. Here, therefore, I ought to be teachable as a babe. Yes, in this respect, I would become as a little child, that I may enter into the knowledge, and possess the privileges, of the kingdom of heaven.

Asp. Your answer, Theron, shall be a law.—“Love to God,” is the first commandment; and, without all peradventure, is the principal grace. But is it easy, is it possible to love God, before we have any persuasion of his love to us? This is what the apostles did not, could not do. And, if it exceeded their ability, it would doubtless be above the reach of our capacity. The thing may be attempted; the practice may be urged; we may see the necessity of it, and desire to perform it: but we shall never be able to exercise it, till we have some comfortable apprehension of God’s reconciliation and good-will to us. “We love him.” Wherefore? from what inducement? “Because he first loved us;”^{*} and because this love

^{*} 1 John iv. 10.

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hath been made evident to our consciences, by the light of faith.

What think you of "delight in God?" This also is a christian grace. But "how can two walk together, except they be agreed?" We can never covet an intimacy with the person, who declares himself our enemy. Nay, if there be only a suspicion, that he bears us a secret ill-will, we shall be jealous of trusting him, and averse to approach him. This was the case of our first parents, immediately after the fall. Instead of drawing near to their Creator, with pleasure and gratitude; they fled from him with anxiety and terror. And why? Because they were under the alarming apprehensions of his displeasure. —Whereas, let us once believe, what the apostle affirms, "When we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son."* Let us cordially credit, what the prophet repeatedly declares, "Therefore will the Lord wait that he may be gracious unto you; and therefore will he be exalted, that he may have mercy upon you."† Then we shall seek his face with alacrity. Our affections will be on the wing to

* Rom. v. 10.

† Isa. xxx. 18. That admirable commentator, Vitringa, who generally draws his bow with a steady hand, and shoots his arrow with the exactest aim, here seems to miss the mark. He appears to have thought, that waiting to be gracious, implies a delay in the exercise of the attribute, and is the same as to abstain from being gracious. Had this been the meaning, the language would probably have been, not *יחכה*, but *יבטל*—To wait to be gracious, signifies to stand over a people with the continued tenders of grace and mercy, even while they refused to accept them. This was the case with God and Israel. God promised to defend the Israelites; they obstinately refused to confide in his protection. Therefore, says God, I will—withdraw my slighted mercy? deny my despised assistance? This would be the manner of human procedure. But the Lord's ways are not as man's ways. His long-suffering triumphs over our perverseness. Therefore he says, "I will not turn away from them, in displeasure; I will even wait for them, and wait upon them till they see their error, and accept my favour."—Amazing condescension and goodness! I was going to say. But divine condescension and goodness are, if I may so speak, infinitely more than amazing.

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salute their almighty Benefactor. We shall “joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ.”*

Ther. To the enjoyment of so many spiritual consolations, and the exercise of several delightful graces, I acknowledge, an assured faith is necessary; but—

Asp. Ay, Theron, you may well hesitate. It will be difficult to fill up the chasm in your discourse. For my part, I know not any duty of holiness, which can be performed aright, without some degree of this confiding faith.—We are to “walk worthy of him, who hath called us to his kingdom and glory:” but if we doubt, whether we in particular are called, how can this influence our conversation?—We are to be “followers of God, as his dear children.”† But if we do not, cannot, will not believe, so as to cry, “Abba, Father,” how can such a consideration sway our hearts? Nay, upon what principles can such a person address himself to discharge any office of the christian life? We are to “abound in the works of the Lord,” from the animating prospect of a glorious resurrection.‡ This he cannot do; because he apprehends himself to have no lot or portion in the blessed hope.—We are to open our hands in charity to others, from a view of that heavenly kingdom, which was prepared for us from the foundation of the world;§ we are to cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, on account of those precious promises, which are freely given to us in Christ Jesus:|| but where unbelieving doubts predominate, these endearing and invigorating motives are lost. The man who has no interest in the encouraging promises, has no title to the blissful inheritance; consequently, the sinews of evangelical obedience, with respect to him, are benumbed, withered, dead.

Ther. Such a man may make prayers and supplications. Though he cannot rejoice in the privileges, he may request them at the throne of grace.

* 1 Thess. ii. 12.

† Eph. v. 1.

‡ 1 Cor. xv. 58.

§ Matt. xxv. 34.

|| 2 Cor. vii. 1.

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Asp. Prayer is a great duty, and as great a privilege. I wish my dear Theron the spirit of grace and supplication. This will be better, incomparably better, and more advantageous, than a key to hidden treasures. But how can you pray with humble boldness, or with lively hope, unless you believe? believe, that Christ is your High Priest; is your Intercessor with the Father; and, with the incense of his infinite merit, presents your petitions? Then, and then only, can you have, what the apostle calls, "boldness and access with confidence."* Take notice of these vigorous expressions; and at your leisure consider, whether they countenance the suspicious and misgiving temper.—At present observe, how yonder lark warbles and mounts in the firmament; as if she was bidding adieu to the earth, and going to mingle with the skies. An image this of believing prayer! Should a fowler shoot the soaring songster through the wing, how would she fall from her elevation, and flutter on the ground! An emblem that of distrusting prayer.

I know not how to leave this subject, without attending to the testimony of St. James: than which nothing can be more awful, or more decisive. It should really alarm the doubting disposition, as much as any solicitation to the most horrid sin. It should alarm the whole religious world, as much as the beacons, suddenly kindled, and all on a flame, would alarm the inhabitants of the maritime coasts. "Let him pray in faith, nothing doubting;† for he that

* Eph. iii. 12. Προσαΰση, "access with a cheering and graceful assurance:" such as those petitioners enjoy, who are introduced to the royal presence, by some distinguished favourite.—Παρρησια, "a boldness or unrestrained liberty of speech;" such as children use, when they present their addresses, and make known their requests, to an indulgent father.—Εν πεποιθησει, "with a well-grounded and steady confidence," that we shall obtain both a favourable acceptance, and a gracious answer.—And all this, "through the faith of Christ," through the worthiness of his person, and the prevalence of his intercession.

† Jam. i. 6. N. B. Nothing doubting, is the apostle's explanation of faith.—Μηδεν διακρινόμενος is, in our translation, nothing wavering.

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doubteth is like a wave of the sea, driven by the wind, and tossed." Nay, the apostle adds,—and it is an addition greatly to be regarded: It should abide with weight on our consciences; for it comes from a casuist, who would neither be too indulgent, through an excess of compassion; nor too rigorous, through an extravagance of zeal.—“ Let not that man,” the doubting supplicant, “ think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord.”

Never then, my worthy friend, never more be an advocate for doubtings. Pursue them with fire and sword. Give them no quarter. Deal with them as Saul was commanded to treat the Amalekites.

Ther. If we are grieved at the remembrance of past sin, and feel an aversion to all sin; if the prevailing bias of our affections be the divine Redeemer, and the habitual breathing of our souls after a conformity to his image; may we not suppose ourselves possessed of the truth and reality, though we have not the confidence and rejoicing of faith? I say, we; because I apprehend, this is not my peculiar case, but common to myself, and many other christians of the weaker sort. I ask, therefore, in their name and in my own, may we not humbly suppose our condition safe, though we do not presume to use the language of the spouse, “ My Beloved is mine, and I am his?”

Asp. So you are still inclined to spare Agag; because delicately and speciously disguised, under the appearance of tenderness to weak souls. I should have thought, the text from St. James must have done execution, like the prophet Samuel’s sword. But since corrosives succeed not, let us make trial of lenitives.

When the great Jehovah is pleased to say, “ I am the Lord thy God;” then, upon this authentic war-

But the very same expression is rendered, Acts x. 20. Nothing doubting. The sense is either way alike. Though, I think, nothing wavering, corresponds too nearly with the comparison, like a wave; makes something of a disagreeable jingle; and flattens the force, or supersedes the necessity, of the following illustration.

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rant, to use the language of the spouse, is neither more or less than to declare: "I am persuaded, that Christ is faithful and true; that he says what he thinks; and will do what he says." Whereas to deny this, by downright unbelief; or to question this, by living in suspense; is not humble duty, but proud disobedience. Might not the Lord Jesus justly complain, "What iniquity have sinners found in me? what unkindness, or what unfaithfulness, that they are so much afraid of confiding in my grace, and of believing my word?"

You ask, whether the state of these persons is safe, and their faith real? I answer, Why should not their state be happy, and their faith assured? Why should you, or they, or any one, plead the text of humility? Let these persons know, whatever their names or their circumstances are, that they have as good a right to adopt the words of the spouse, as we have to walk in these gardens, and enjoy their refined delights.—Yet they will do well to remember, that those qualifications, however amiable, are by no means the ground of their right. They are to advance their claim, and hold fast the blessing, not as men ornamented with fine endowments, but as poor, indigent, guilty sinners. For such the Saviour is provided; to such his benefits are proposed; and on such his grace will be magnified.

Ther. Do you elude my question, or give up your point? One or the other my Aspasio certainly does.

Asp. Since my friend so peremptorily affirms, I will not have the ill manners to deny. I will own the former charge, the latter I cannot admit. I will own, that, at present, I had rather act as a comforter, than a disputant. On some other occasion I will undertake to consider, and endeavour to answer, all your objections.—In the mean time, I am far from giving up the point, barely by enquiring, Why such persons should lose their time, and perhaps embarrass their minds, in these unprofitable suppositions? when there is a direct, a compendious, and a certain

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method of obtaining peace, by appropriating Christ and his merits; without recurring to any such qualifications.

Nevertheless, if you insist on a positive reply, I am obliged to declare, that faith consists in none of those qualifications which you describe. The language of faith is not,—“ I feel such an aversion; I am actuated with such a bias; or I breathe such a desire.” But—“ God has freely loved me; Christ has graciously died for me; and the Holy Ghost will assuredly sanctify me in the belief, the appropriating belief, of these precious truths.”

* But see, Theron! Yonder black and low-hung cloud points this way. It seems big with a shower; it marches on apace; and will soon be over our heads. We must instantly fly to shelter.

Ther. It is well we have this summer-house for our shelter. The thickest boughs would be insufficient to screen us. I think, I never saw a more impetuous burst of rain. A shower! No, 'tis a descending deluge. The large, ropy, reeking drops, come down like a torrent.†—Surprising! What a dreadful flash

* If the reader finds this dialoguc too long, here he will have a convenient resting place.

† Come down like a torrent.—This is the import of that strong picturesque word מַרְרָה Psa. lxxvii. 17. In this manner, “ The clouds poured out water: while the air thundered; and the arrows of the Almighty went abroad.” Mr. Addison, if I remember right, admires the psalmist’s description of a storm at sea; because it dwells only upon the grand and most striking circumstances; without descending, like Virgil’s enervated representation, to such little particulars, as the cries of men, and the noise of oars. “ Clamorque virum, stridorque rudentum.” This description of a tempest is, I think, equally admirable on the same account. The three greatest and most terrible peculiarities are selected; and expressed with all the conciseness, yet with all the vigour, which language can unite.

I have not met with any commentator; who enters into the spirit of the next verse. And, in our liturgy translation, its majesty sinks into meanness, its propriety degenerates into tautology. Whereas, it is by no means a vain repetition; but heightens and enlarges the formidable idea, by displaying the effects of what had been described, in the foregoing lines. “ The voice of thy thunder was in the heaven:” the volleys not only resounded, but resounded from pole to

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was there! A sheet of sulphureous fire, launched from the dismal gloom, and wrapping the whole skies in a blaze!—Not a moment's interval between the lightning's rage, and the thunder's roar. How sudden and vast the explosion! What a deep, prolonged, tremendous peal ensues! It seems as if the poles of earth, and the pillars of nature, cracked!

See, my dear Aspasio! see the direful havoc; the horrid effects of this elementary tumult.—Yonder oak, which reared its towering head aloft, and spread wide its graceful branches, is, in the twinkling of an eye, turned into a naked trunk. There it stands, singed and tore; stripped of its verdant honours,* and surrounded with its own shattered fragments. How fearful is the artillery of heaven!

Asp. And why—why did not the blow fall on this guilty breast? Why was not the fiery bolt, which flew so near, commissioned to pierce our hearts?—If our heavenly Father has been so tenderly careful of these perishing bodies, will he not be much more gracious to our immortal souls? Will he not clothe them with that immaculate robe, which is the only security from the stroke of eternal vengeance?—And let me ask, can this be a security to us, unless we are vested with it? Could this building, though very substantial, have secured us from the rushing rains, if we had not betaken ourselves to its friendly covert?

Christ is represented, in the prophecy of Isaiah, by this very image; as “a place of refuge, and as a co-

pole, and filled כנגלל the vast circumference of the skies. “The lightning lightened the world;” and the flashes not only shone, but shone far and near, and illuminated the whole world with their blaze; “the earth trembled to its centre, and its inhabitants shreek with horror.”

* Does not this give us the most awful and grand sense of Psa. xxix. 5? “The voice of the Lord, when uttered in thunder, and accompanied with lightning, יתסף יערות not discovereth the thick bushes, but strips the forest; lays bare the branching woods; reduces the most magnificent and flourishing cedars to naked and withered trunks.

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vert from the storm and from rain.”* That is, his merits and death are a sure protection from the curse of the law, and the damnation of hell. No fury of the elements so terrible as these; no bulwark of stone so impregnable as those.—If this is a proper emblem of Christ, to what shall we liken faith? To a persuasion, that the shelter of the summer-house is free for use? To a high esteem of its protection, or an habitual tendency toward it?—Would this defend us from the inclemencies of the weather? Would this keep us dry, amidst (what you call) the descending deluge? Would this esteem, desire, or tendency, unless carried into actual entrance and possession, be a proper safeguard, or indeed any manner of advantage to our persons?

Ther. No, Aspasio; neither would a persuasion that the summer-house is mine.

Asp. True; but a belief that Christ is mine, is like entering the summer-house. When the divine Spirit reveals the obedient and dying Saviour in my heart; when I am enabled to believe, that his death was the desert of my sins, and his obedience is the matter of my justification; when I live in the exercise of this appropriating faith; then I find that comfort, and I receive that benefit, which correspond with the repose and security we now enjoy from this hospitable structure.

Ther. May I then, from this instant, look upon Christ, his glorious person, his perfect righteousness, and his precious death, as my certain inheritance? May I firmly believe, that through this grand, immensely meritorious cause, I shall have pardon and acceptance, true holiness, and endless salvation?

Asp. Why should you not believe all this firmly? You have the same reason to believe with a steady confidence, as to believe with any degree of affiance. It is the free promise of the gospel, addressed to sinners, that warrants the latter; and the very same promise,

* Isa. xxiv. 6.

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under the same circumstances of unmerited munificence, authorizes the former.

You have heard my opinion, hear now what our Lord himself says; "Let him that is athirst, come; and whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely."* He may partake of my spiritual and unspeakable blessings, as freely as he makes use of the most common refreshments; as freely as he drinks of the running stream. This is his royal proclamation.—Hear his gracious invitation. "Look unto me, and be ye saved;"† saved from your disquieting fears, by justification; saved from your domineering corruptions, by sanctification; saved from every evil, by complete and eternal redemption. To whom is this most affectionate call directed? Not to a few distinguished favourites only, but to "all the ends of the earth." None are excepted; none are prohibited; and can my Theron imagine, that he is excluded?

Nay farther, hear our Lord's earnest entreaty; hear his tender and repeated importunity; "As though God did beseech you by us, we pray you, in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God."‡ Hark! 'Tis the voice of infinitely-condescending love, speaking by his ambassador:—"Sinners, accept my great salvation. Enjoy what I have purchased for you, by my dying agonies. Do not suspect my kindness, or refuse my gifts. This will wound me deeper, than the spear which pierced my heart."—O! the grace of our exalted King. He bows from his celestial throne. He almost kneels to his guilty creatures. He begs, he even begs of obnoxious sinners, not to reject his mercies.—After all this, can you entertain the least doubt, Theron, whether you have a permission to believe firmly?

Ther. This is extraordinary goodness indeed! I have often read these passages, but never saw them, till this hour, in a light so engaging and so encouraging.

Asp. Should not this threefold cord be strong enough to draw my dear friend; let me add (what

* Rev. xxii. 17.

† Isa. xlv. 22.

‡ 2 Cor. v. 20.

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must absolutely supersede all objections) the plain, express, peremptory command of the Almighty: "This is his command, that we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ."* Pray, examine the language; not he allows only; or barely advises; but commands. We are not only permitted, but strictly required. It is not only our privilege, but God's positive injunction.—Upon the discovery of such a Saviour, methinks every heart should cry; "O that I might be allowed to approach him! to solicit an interest in him! How gladly would I wait, ever so long a time, in ever so mean a posture, if I might at the last receive him as my portion!"—The superabundant goodness of God prevents our wishes, and exceeds our hopes. "I freely give my Son," saith the Lord, "and all his riches to you. I beseech you as a compassionate friend, not to refuse him. I enjoin you, as an uncontrollable sovereign, to believe on him."—How gracious! most amazingly gracious is this command! And give me leave to hint, it is the greatest and most important command that ever issued from the throne of glory. If this be neglected, no other can be kept; if this be observed, all others will be easy.—Now, Theron, will you not receive Christ, and look upon his all-sufficient merits as your own? Is not your warrant clear and unexceptionable? nay, is not your obligation strong and indispensable?

Ther. Truly, Aspasio, you put all my mistrustful apprehensions to the stand. Here is a proclamation from the blessed God,—seconded by his invitation,—accompanied by his intreaty,—and all enforced by his command. I know not what can be a fuller proof of your point, or stronger inducement to believe.

Asp. Yes, my friend, I can produce (if such a thing be possible) stronger proof still; such as, I hope, will totally rout unbelief, and drive all her forces from the field.

God has not only invited you, entreated you, and commanded you to live under the sweet persuasion,

* 1 John iii. 23.

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that his Son is your Saviour; but he has given you the grandest ratification of this precious truth.—He has passed his word; he has made you a firm promise; nay, he has given you many and various promises, of this inestimable blessing. And “God is not a man, that he should lie; or the son of man, that he should repent. Hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?”* Heaven and earth may drop into nothing, sooner than one promise, or indeed one jot or tittle of his promise, should fall to the ground.

Besides this, he has given you, if I may so speak, a note under his own hand. He has recorded his promises in the Bible, written them with an everlasting pen; so that they will stand conspicuous and indelible, like a bill drawn upon heaven, and a basis laid for faith, so long as the sun and moon endure.

Nay, he has confirmed all, by the most solemn sanction imaginable; by his oath; by his own oath; by the oath of a God. Though his word is sure, and his promise immutable, he adds (astonishing condescension, adorable benignity!) he adds his oath to all. He not only speaks, but swears, swears by himself; swears by his own eternal existence; that his promises belong—to whom? Mark this particular with the most exact attention. To whom do those promises belong, which are ratified in this unequalled and inviolable manner?—To the holy, the upright, the accomplished?—To those, says the scripture, “who fly for refuge to the hope set before them;”† the hope set before them in the propitiation, the righteousness, the ineffable merits of Christ.

Ther. May I then believe, firmly believe, assuredly believe, that Jesus the Mediator, and all the rich benefits of his mediation, are mine? Pardon me, Aspasio, for reiterating the question. I am really, with respect to the obedience of faith, too much like that Saxon monarch, who, for his remissness and inactivity, was surnamed the Unready.‡

* Numb. xxiii. 19.

† Heb. vi. 17, 18.

‡ Ethelred.

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Asp. I do more than pardon my dear Theron, I feel for him, and I sympathize with him. If there is some of that Saxon prince's disease running in his religion; I am sure, there is too much of it in mine; and I fear it is an epidemical distemper. But let us reflect a moment.—Suppose any neighbour of substance and credit, should bind himself by a deliberate promise to do you some particular piece of service;—if he should add to his promise a note under his own hand;—if he should corroborate both by some authentic pledge;—if he should establish all by a most awful and solemn oath:—could you suspect the sincerity of his engagement, or harbour any doubt with regard to its execution? This would be most unreasonable in any one; and to your generous temper, I am very certain it would be impossible.—Let us remember, that God has given us all this cause for an assurance of faith, and more. Nay, I will defy the most timorous and suspicious temper, to demand from the most treacherous person on earth, a greater, stronger, fuller security, than the God of infinite fidelity has granted to you and me.—After all this, one would think diffidence itself could no longer hesitate, nor the most jealous incredulity demur. Shall we, can we withhold that affiance from the unchangeable Creator, which we could not but repose on a fallible creature?

Ther. You rouse and animate me, Aspaio. O! that I may arise, and, with the divine assistance, shake off this stupor of unbelief? Certainly, it can never be honourable to God, nor pleasing to Christ, nor profitable to ourselves.

Asp. If it be, then cherish it; maintain it; and never relinquish it.—But how can it be honourable to God? It depreciates his goodness; it is a reproach to his veracity; nay, the apostle scruples not to affirm, that it makes him a liar.* Whereas, they who believe his testimony, glorify his faithfulness; glorify his beneficence; and, as John the Baptist speaks, “set to

* 1 John v. 10.

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their seal, God is true.”*—I have been informed, that, when the late Elector of Hanover was declared, by the parliament of Great Britain, successor to the vacant throne, several persons of distinction waited upon his highness, in order to make timely application for the most valuable preferments. Several requests of this nature were granted, and each was confirmed by a kind of promissory note. One gentleman, particularly, solicited for the mastership of the rolls. Being indulged in his desire, he was offered the same confirmation, which had been vouchsafed to other successful petitioners. Upon which, he seemed to be under a pang of graceful confusion and surprise; begged that he might not put the royal donour to such unnecessary trouble; at the same time protesting, that he looked upon his highness’s word, as the very best ratification of his suit.—With this conduct, and this compliment, the elector was not a little pleased.—“This is the gentleman,” he said, “who does me real honour; treats me like a king; and whoever is disappointed, he shall certainly be gratified.” So, we are assured by the testimony of revelation, that the patriarch, who staggered not through unbelief, gave, and in the most signal, the most acceptable manner, glory to God.†

Is it pleasing to Christ?—Quite the reverse. It dishonours his merit; it detracts from the dignity of his righteousness; it would enervate the power of his intercession. Accordingly you may observe, there is nothing which our Lord so frequently reprovèd in his followers, as this spirit of unbelief.—What says he to his disciples, when he came down from the mount of transfiguration? “O faithless and perverse generation!”† They were perverse because faithless.—What says he to the travellers, whom he overtook in their

* John iii. 33.

† Rom. iv. 20.

† Διεστραμμένη Matt. xvii. 17. A believing state of mind, is like some well-arranged and beautiful system of limbs. Unbelief dislocates the parts, distorts the harmonious frame, and disfigures its comely proportion.

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journey to Emmaus? "O fools, and slow of heart to believe!"* They were fools, because slow to believe.—What says he to the apostles, after his resurrection? "Jesus upbraided them with their unbelief."† He took no notice of their cowardly and perfidious behaviour; he inveighed against none of their other follies and infirmities; but he upbraided them with their unbelief. Not gently rebuked. No; this was a fault so unreasonable in itself, so reproachful to their Master, so pernicious to themselves, that he severely reprimanded them for it; with an air of vehemence, and with a mixture of invective.

Is it profitable to ourselves?—Nothing less. It damps our love, and diminishes our comfort. It subjects us to that fear, which hath torment; and disqualifies us for that obedience, which is filial. In a word, this distrustful and unbelieving temper weakens every principle of piety, and impoverishes the whole soul. Whence come spiritual obstinacy and remissness? whence proceed sterility and unfruitfulness in the knowledge of Christ? St. Peter ascribes them all to an habitual unbelief. Such persons, he says, "have forgotten that they were purged from their former sins."‡—In the regenerate, where it remains, it is very detrimental; for "they that will not believe,

* *Ανοητοι*, Luke xxiv. 25. Not thoughtless, but stupid creatures; void of understanding; as we say in English, without common sense; or, as Horace would have said in Latin,

O tribus Anticyris caput insanabile!

† Mark xvi. 14. The word is *επιλιμνησον*, as in Luke xvii. 3; not *ελεγξεν*, as in Tit. i. 13; but *ανειδισεν*. Which signifies not barely a rebuke, but a rebuke accompanied with keen and stinging reflections; such as may cover the face with blushes, and wound the heart with anguish.—It is used by the evangelist Luke, and by the apostle Peter, to describe those calumnies, invectives, and reproaches, with which the persecutors of christianity endeavoured to gall and afflict the christians. Luke vi. 22. 1 Pet. iv. 14.—Though our Lord Jesus was most amiably tender and gentle; yet, when severity was necessary and wholesome, he knew how to be severe. Our all-wise Physician could apply the caustic, as well as administer the cordial.

‡ 2 Pet. i. 8, 9.

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shall not be established.* In the unregenerate, where it prevails, it is absolutely destructive; and though it may not kill like an apoplexy, it wastes like a consumption. "They could not enter in, because of unbelief."†

Let us then, my dear friend, cast away this sin, which so easily besets us both. It clogs our feet; it hampers all our powers; and hinders us from running, with alacrity and speed, "the race that is set before us."—What says David? "God hath spoken in his holiness;‡ hath made an express and inviolable promise, that I shall be ruler of his people Israel. "I will rejoice therefore;" away with every alarming apprehension; I will even exult and triumph. Nay more; "I will divide Shechem, and mete out the valley of Succoth;" I will look upon the whole land as my own. I will divide it, and dispose of it, just as if it was already in my possession.—Why should not you and I also say; "God hath spoken in his holiness;" hath expressly and solemnly declared, The promise of an all-sufficient Saviour is to you. "We will rejoice, therefore; confiding in this most faithful word, we will bid adieu to all disquieting fears, and make our boast of this glorious Redeemer. Yes; notwithstanding all our unworthiness, Christ and his atonement, Christ and his righteousness, are ours. God hath passed his word; and amidst all our temptations, his word is our anchor; its hold is firm, and its ground immoveable.§

Ther. I have heard some people distinguish be-

* Isa. vii. 9.

† Heb. iii. 12.

‡ Psal. lx. 6.

§ This very important doctrine is more copiously displayed, in some sermons of Mr. Ebenezer Erskine's, on the assurance of faith, vol. III. p. 201.—Was I to read, in order to refine my taste; or improve my style; I would prefer Bishop Atterbury's Sermons, Dr. Bate's Works, or Mr. Seed's Discourses. But was I to read, with a single view to the edification of my heart, in true faith, solid comfort, and evangelical holiness; I would have recourse to Mr. Erskine, and take his volumes for my guide, my companion, and my own familiar friend.

This refers to a select collection of Messrs. Ebenezer and Ralph

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tween the faith of reliance, and faith of assurance; between the reflex and the direct act of faith. Methinks I approve these sentiments, though I dislike the terms. The sentiments are happily adapted to the relief of human infirmity; though the terms are rather too abstruse for ordinary capacities to understand.

Asp. I cannot say, that I am very fond, either of the one, or of the other. In my opinion, they both partake too much of the subtilty of the schools; and are more likely to create perplexity, than to administer godly edifying. For which reason, I should choose to drop the difficult phrases, and not to dwell on the nice distinctions. Yet, if we must not dismiss them without some notice, I would just remark,—

That the faith of reliance, in its true scriptural sense, includes or presupposes a degree of assurance.—Includes; for what is reliance, but a repose of the mind, which is attended with tranquillity, and excludes perturbation? How can this take place, if there be no sort of conviction, that “the Lord is my light and my salvation?”—Presupposes; for who would rely on a satisfaction made, without being persuaded, that the satisfaction is for him and his iniquities? Reliance, separated from this persuasion, seems to be neither comfortable nor reasonable.

As to those who insist upon what they call the reflex act of faith; sure, they mistake the nature of the thing. This, if I understand them aright, is their way of arguing, “I am a new creature; I love the Lord Jesus in sincerity; I have the fruits of the Spirit. From hence it is plain, that Christ and his salvation are mine.” Now, in all this procedure I cannot discern the least footstep of faith; no, not the least trace of receiving a testimony, or relying upon a Saviour. Here is nothing more than a logical deduction of one

Erskine's, published at London, in three volumes octavo. The sermons on the assurance of faith, are to be found in the first volume of Mr. Ebenezer Erskine's Sermons, printed at Edinburgh in 1761.

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proposition from another; a conclusion drawn from given premises. Grant the latter, and any person, without any aid from the Spirit, will infer the former. It may, therefore, more properly be reckoned an act of reasoning, than of believing; it is founded on what we ourselves feel, not upon the record of a faithful God; and it is styled, by judicious writers, the assurance of sense rather than of faith.

When, in conformity to the aforementioned opinion, we are advised to prove our title to comfort, by genuine marks of conversion; and taught on this column to fix the capital of assurance; I would rather propose a question, than advance objections—Is not this somewhat like placing the dome of a cathedral upon the stalk of a tulip?

Ther. No, say they; it was the practice of the apostle himself; and he has left it upon record, as a pattern for all posterity to copy. “We know that we are passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren.”

Asp. Observe, Theron, the process of the apostle’s reasoning. It is like the form of an inverted cone; where you have first the point, and from thence proceed to the base. So the sacred writer begins with the less, and ascends to the greater proof. He says, in one of the following verses; “Hereby perceive we the love of God,* because he laid down his life,” not

* 1 John iii. 16. The word *God* is not in the original. It was omitted by the apostle, just as the particular name is omitted by Mary, when she speaks to the gardener; Sir, if thou hast borne him hence:—and by the church, when she addresses the sacred object of her affection; Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth: John xx. 15. Cant. i. 1.—In all which places, there is a language, a very emphatical language, even in the silence. It declares how deeply the heart was penetrated, how totally the thoughts were possessed, by the beloved and illustrious subject. It expresses also the superlative dignity and amiableness of the person meant: as though he, and he alone, either was or deserved to be known and admired by all. For which reason, to mention his name, or display his excellences, seemed as needless, as to shew light to the opened eye.

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merely for sinners, but for us in particular.—Here, you see, is assurance by the direct act of faith. From this truth believed, from this blessing received, the love of the brethren takes its rise. Which may very justly be admitted as an evidence, that our faith is real, and our assurance no delusion. As yonder leaves may serve to distinguish the particular species, and ascertain the healthy state of the trees on which they grow.

When your tenants bring in the rent, this affords no contemptible evidence, that the lands which they respectively occupy, are yours. But this is a proof which does not occur every day of the week; it is occasional only, and of the subordinate kind.—The grand demonstration, that which is always at hand, and always forcible, is your possession of the deeds of conveyance. Thus, the promise of God in his divine word is our charter, or the authentic conveyance of our right to pardon and salvation. Make just the same difference between this promise and your own holiness, as you make between the writings of your estate and the receipt of the revenues; you will then judge aright, because your judgment will coincide with the apostle's.

Besides, this method of seeking peace and assurance, I fear, will perplex the simple-minded; and cherish, rather than suppress, the fluctuations of doubt. For, let the marks be what you please, a love of the brethren or a love of all righteousness, a change of heart or an alteration of life; these good qualifications are sometimes like the stars at noon-day, not easily, if at all, discernible; or else they are like a glow-worm in the night, glimmering, rather than shining; consequently will yield, at the best, but a feeble, at the worst, a very precarious evidence.—If in such a manner, we should acquire some little assurance, how soon may it be unsettled by the incursions of daily temptation, or destroyed by the insurrection of remaining sin! At such a juncture,

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how will it keep its standing? how retain its being? It will fare like a tottering wall, before the tempest; or be "as the rush without mire, and the flag without water."*

Instead therefore of poring on our own hearts, to discover by inherent qualities our interest in Christ, I should rather renew my application to the free and faithful promise of the Lord; assert and maintain my title, on this unalterable ground.—“Pardon is mine; I would say, grace is mine; Christ and all his spiritual blessings are mine. Why? because I am conscious of sanctifying operations in my own breast? Rather, God hath spoken in his holiness; because all these precious priviledges are consigned over to me in the everlasting gospel, with a clearness unquestionable as the truth, with a certainty inviolable as the oath, of God.”

Cast your eye into yonder meadow. Take notice of that industrious fisherman; how intent he is upon the pursuit of his business. He has just thrown his net, and taken a considerable booty. You do not see him spending his time in idle triumphs, on account of his success. He does not stand to measure the dimensions of the fish, or compute the value of his prize. But having, without delay, secured the captives; he prepares for another cast, and hopes for another draught.

So let us, instead of exulting in any past acquisitions, seek afresh to the inexhaustible fulness of our Saviour, for renewed communications. If we have been blessed with any taste of his goodness, or any tokens of his love, let us not too fondly doat upon the sweetness of such experiences. Let us not make them the foundation of our confidence, but only so many encouragements to persevere and advance in believing; that, having life and peace from our divine Head, we may have them “more abundantly.”† Then will be fulfilled the saying which is written, “The

* Job viii. 11.

† John x. 10.

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just," the righteous in Jesus Christ, "shall live;" shall not only be delivered from condemnation and death, but shall thrive in comfort, and flourish in holiness.—How? by reflecting on their sanctification, or viewing their own attainments? No; but by the infinitely more encouraging views of their completeness in Christ, and by a fresh, a repeated, a never-ceasing exercise of "faith,"* on that Holy One of God.

This, I verily think, nay this the apostle testifies, is the most effectual way of feeding that lamp, and quickening that flame; which, having cheered us in our earthly pilgrimage, will be brightened up into immortal glory in the heavens.

Here they went in; and after a slight refreshment, took coach.—As they were returning home, Theron observed, not without concern, the changed and melancholy aspect of things, in the territories of the husbandman. The fields of corn, which, a little while ago, were gracefully erect, or softly inclining to the breeze, lay sunk and flatted under the impetuous rains.—Such, added Aspasio, such I apprehend will be our faith, if it aspires not after assurance, or if its assurance is erected on any endowments of our own.

Ther. If this is the case, what can be the reason, why so many people are totally destitute of all religious assurance? have no notion of it, much less aspire after it; and as to full assurance, they would be much surprised, perhaps highly disgusted, at the very mention of such a doctrine?

Asp. If people never aspire after the assurance of faith, or an appropriating interest in Christ, I very much question, whether they are truly awakened, or really in earnest. They are like the men of Ephraim, whom the prophet styles, "a cake not turned;" † neither bread, not yet dough; neither absolute reprobates, nor real saints. Or, as our Lord explains the proverb, in his charge against the church of Laodicea, they are "neither hot nor cold" ‡ not frozen in insen-

* Rom. i. 17.

† Hos. vii. 8.

‡ Rév. iii. 15.

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sibility, 'tis true; at the same time, not fervent in spirit; but indifferent and lukewarm in the concerns of religion.—As to a full assurance, or the highest degree of this grace, was I to declare myself more explicitly upon this point, it should be in the calm and moderate words of a judicious divine: “I do not affirm, that, without a full assurance, there is no faith. But this I maintain, that wherever the latter exists, there will be a sincere pursuit of the former.”

Among the reasons why so few persons attain this eminent blessing, we may reckon the following.—They understand not the perfect freeness of grace, nor the immense merits of Christ.—They never consider the unspeakable value of an assured faith; neither are they aware, that it is intended for the enjoyment of sinners. Either they seek it not at all; or else they seek it, where it is not to be found; from some works of righteousness in themselves, rather than from the gracious promise of God in his word: which is altogether as ill-judged, and as sure to issue in disappointment, as if a person should go in quest of ice amidst the torrid zone, or expect to find spicy islands under the northern pole.

But whether people consider it or no, the value of an assured faith is indeed unspeakable. When this is wrought in the heart, peace will stand firm, and afflictions drop their sting. Prayer will return laden with treasures, and death will approach stripped of its terrors. The soul will be “as a watered garden,” and all her graces “blossom as a rose.”—When this is wrought in the heart, the gospel of Christ will appear with new charms, and operate with new energy. Its hymns will no longer be a strange language to your ear, nor its privileges as forbidden fruit to your palate. You will then, as you peruse each sacred page, feel it to be the power of God, and “taste that the Lord is gracious.”* You will reap a benefit, and

* 1 Pet. ii. 3.

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enjoy a delight, as much superior to those of the doubting reader, as the pleasure of eating this delicious peach, is superior to the mere description of its agreeable relish.

Bear with me a moment longer, Theron. For you can hardly imagine, what an improvement and exaltation this will give to every truth you contemplate, and every object you behold. When you contemplate the rise of kingdoms, and the fall of empires; when you recollect the many great and astonishing events recorded in the history of nations; how highly delightful must it be to say, "All these passed under the superintendency of that hand, which was pierced with the bloody nail, and fastened to the cursed cross for me!"—When you behold the magnificence of creation, and the richness of its furniture; the grandeur of nature, and the variety of her works; what a heightened pleasure must they all impart, if, as you view the glorious scene, your thoughts make answer to your eyes; "All these were brought into existence by that adorable Person, who sustained my guilt, and wrought out my justifying righteousness!"

O! that we may possess this "precious faith!"* that it may grow incessantly, "grow exceedingly!"† till it be rooted, like those full-grown oaks, under which we lately walked; and grounded,‡ like that well-built edifice, which is still in our view.

Ther. I join with my Aspasio in this wish; and must beg of him to inform me, how I may attain so desirable a blessing.

Asp. You have entirely cured me, Theron, of making apologies: would to God I might be as successfully instrumental in delivering my friend from his doubts; that the gospel might come to us, as it came

* 2 Pet. i. 1.

† 2 Thess. i. 3.

‡ Rooted and grounded, *ερριζωμενοι και τεθεμελειωμενοι*. These are the apostle's beautiful ideas, or rather expressive similitudes, each comprehended in a single word. Eph. iii. 18.

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to the Thessalonians, “not in word only, but in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance.”*

Prayer is the first expedient. Every good gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of light. Christ is not only the object, but the author and finisher of our faith. “Lord, increase our faith,” was the request of the disciples, and should be the prevailing language of our hearts.

Lay up many of the divine promises in your memory. Stock that noble cabinet with this invaluable treasure. “Faith cometh by hearing,”† by meditating on, by praying over, this word of life, and word of grace.—And never, never forget the freeness, with which the promise is made, and its good things are bestowed. You are to receive the one, and apply the other; not with a full, but with an empty hand; not as a righteous person, but as an unworthy creature.

Make the trial. Exercise yourself in this grand secret of true godliness. I am satisfied, it will be productive of the most beneficial effects.—Look unto Jesus as dying in your stead, and purchasing both grace and glory for your enjoyment. Come unto God, as a poor sinner, yet with a confident dependence; expecting all spiritual blessings, through him that loved you, and gave himself for you.—“He that believeth,” with this appropriating faith, “shall not be confounded,”‡ nor frustrated in his expectations. “He that believeth,” with this appropriating faith, “shall have the witness in himself.”§ Nothing will bring in such light and peace, such holiness and happiness, to his soul.—The Ephesians, thus believing, “were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise.|| The dispersed of Israel,

* 1 Thess. i. 5.

† Rom. x. 17. On which account the scriptures are styled, “the words of faith,” 1 Tim. iv. 6.

‡ 1 Pet. ii. 6.

§ 1 John v. 10.

|| Eph. i. 13. Πιστευσαυτες εσφρατισθητε, not after that ye “believed, ye were sealed;” but “believing ye were sealed.” In the way of believing, ye became partakers of this sealing and sanctifying Spirit.

Faith the vehicle and instrument of every good.

thus believing, rejoiced with joy unspeakable.”*—These were marked out as rightful heirs, these were blessed with some delightful foretastes, and both were prepared for the complete fruition of life and immortality. O! that we may “be followers of their example, and sharers of their felicity!”

As for those doubts which have given you so much perplexity, and cost us so long a disquisition, look upon them as some of your greatest enemies. Oppose them with all the resolution and all the vigour of your mind.—Nay, look upon those unreasonable doubts, as some of your greatest sins. Confess them, with the deepest shame; and pray against them, with the utmost ardour.—With equal assiduity and zeal, let us press after a stedfast, an immoveable, a triumphant faith.—Faith is the vehicle and the instrument of every good; “All things are possible to him that believeth.”†—Faith is the immediate and grand end of the whole gospel; “These things are written, that ye might believe.”‡—Let us therefore covet, earnestly let us covet this best of gifts, and “shew all diligence to the full assurance of hope.”§

DIALOGUE XVII.

THE next morning, Theron ordered a cold collation to be prepared, and his pleasure-boat to hold itself in readiness.—Breakfast being dispatched, and some necessary orders relating to the family given; Now,

Conformably to the expostulation of the apostle on another occasion, “Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?”

* 1 Pet. i. 8.

† John xx. 31.

‡ Mark ix. 23.

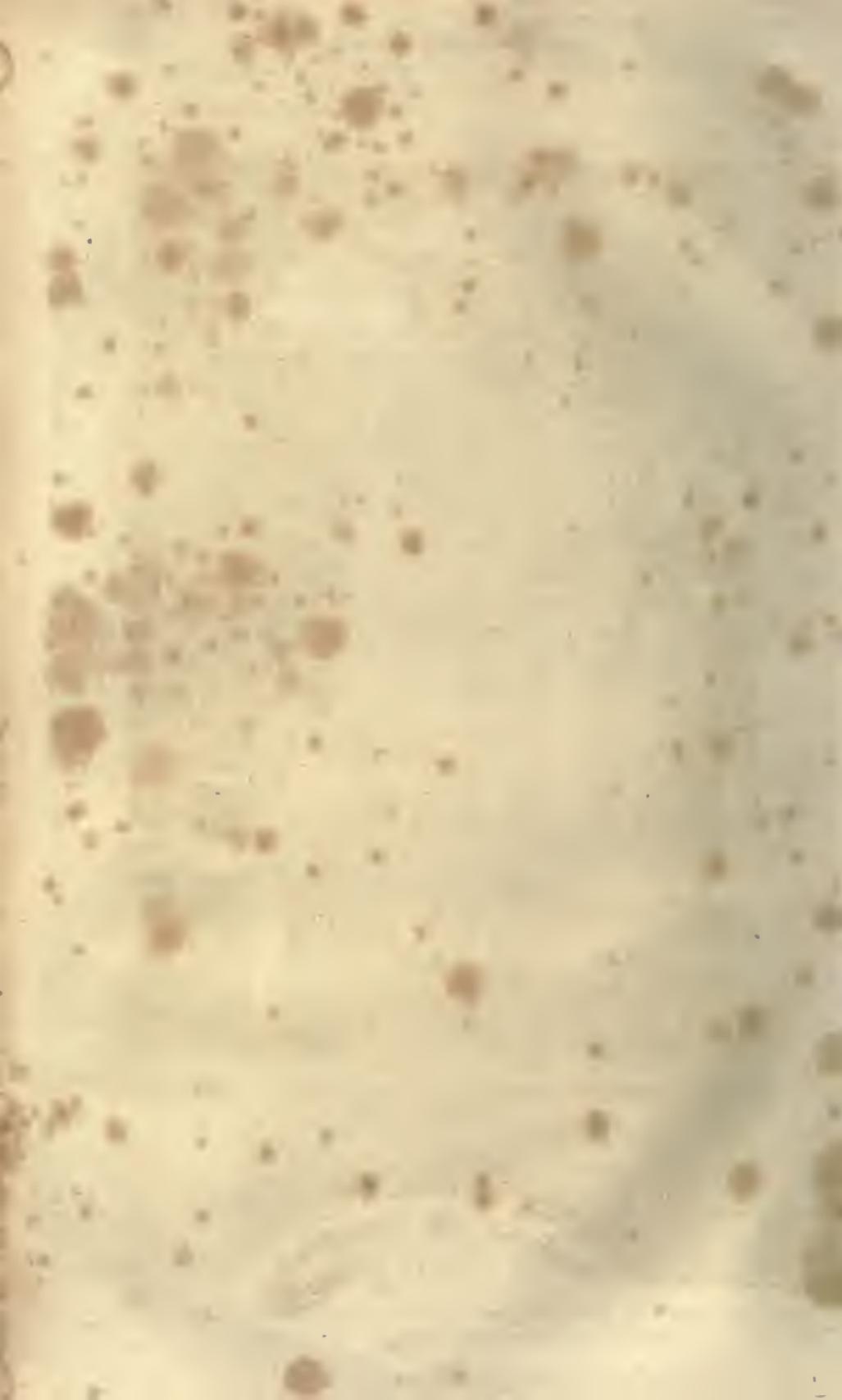
§ Heb. vii. 11.



TERRON & ASPASIO.
Dialogue the Seventeenth.

Craig del.

W. Burright sc.



A river voyage.

says he to Aspasio, let me fulfil my promise; or rather let us execute our mutual engagement; and consign the remainder of this mild and charming day to a rural excursion.

We will take our rout along one of the finest roads in the world: a road, incomparably more curious and durable, than the famous causeways raised by those puissant hands which conquered the globe: a road which has subsisted from the beginning of time; and, though frequented by innumerable carriages, laden with the heaviest burdens, has never been gulled, never wanted repair, to this very hour.—Upon this, they step into the chariot, and are conveyed to a large navigable river, about three quarters of a mile distant from the house.—Here they launch upon a new element, attended by two or three servants, expert at handling the oar, and managing the nets.

Is this the road, replied Aspasio, on which my friend bestows his panegyric? It is indeed more curious in its structure, and more durable in its substance, than the celebrated Roman causeways: though I must assure you, the latter have a very distinguished share of my esteem. I admire them far beyond Trajan's pillar, or Caracala's baths, far beyond the idle pomp of the pantheon, or the worse than idle magnificence of the amphitheatre. They do the truest honour to the empire; because while they were the glory of Rome, they were a general good;* and not only a monument of her grandeur, but a benefit to mankind.

But more than all these works, I admire that excellent and divinely gracious purpose, to which Providence made the empire itself subservient. It was a kind of road or causeway for the everlasting gospel,

* These roads ran through all Italy, and stretched themselves into the territories of France. They were carried across the Alps, the Pyrenean mountains, and through the whole kingdom of Spain. Some of them, towards the south, reached even to Ethiopia; and some of them, towards the north, extended as far as Scotland. The remains of several of them continue in England to this day; though they were made, it is probable, above 1600 years ago.

and afforded the word of life a free passage to the very ends of the earth. The evangelical dove mounted the wings of the Roman eagle; and flew, with surprising expedition, through all nations.—Who would have thought, that insatiable ambition, and the most bloody wars, should be paving a way for the Prince of humility and peace? How remote from all human apprehension was such a design; and how contrary to the natural result of things was such an event! Most remarkably therefore was that observation of the psalmist verified; “His ways are in the sea, and his paths in the great waters, and his footsteps are not known.*

Conversing on such agreeable subjects, they were carried, by the stream, through no less agreeable scenes. They pass by hills clothed with hanging woods, and woods arrayed in varying green. Here, excluded from a sight of the outstretched plains, they are entertained with a group of unsubstantial images, and the wonders of a mimic creation.—Another sun shines, but stript of his blazing beams, in the watery concave: while clouds sail along the downward skies, and sometimes disclose, sometimes draw a veil over, the radiant orb. Trees, with their inverted tops, either flourish in the fair serene below; or else paint, with a pleasing delusion, the pellucid flood. Even the mountains are there, but in a headlong posture; and, notwithstanding their prodigious bulk, they quiver in this floating mirror, like the poplar leaves which adorn their sides.

Soon as the boat advances, and disturbs the placid surface, the waves, pushed hastily to the bank, bear off, in broken fragments, the liquid landscape. The spreading circles seemed to prophesy, as they rolled; and pronounced the pleasures of this present state.—the pomp of power, the charm of beauty, and the echo of fame;—pronounced them transient, as their speedy passage; empty, as their unreal freight.—

* Psa. lxxvii. 19.

enjoyed in a river voyage.

Seemed to prophesy? It was more. Imagination heard them utter, as they ran,

Thus pass the shadowy scenes of life away.

Emerging from this fluid alley, they dart amidst the level of a spacious meadow. The eye, lately immured, though in pleasurable confinement, now expands her delighted view, into a space almost boundless, and amidst objects little short of innumerable. Transported for a while, at the numberless variety of beauteous images, poured in sweet confusion all around, she hardly knows where to fix, or which to pursue. Recovering, at length, from the pleasing perplexity, she glances, quick and instantaneous, across all the intermediate plain, and marks the distant mountains: how cliffs climb over cliffs, till the huge ridges gain upon the sky; how their diminished tops are dressed in blue, or wrapped in clouds; while all their leafy structures, and all their fleecy tenants, are lost in air.

Soon she quits these aërial summits, and ranges the russet heath; here shagged with brakes, or tufted with rushes; there interspersed with straggling thickets, or solitary trees; which seem, like disaffected partisans, to shun each other's shade.—A spire, placed in a remote valley, peeps over the hills. Sense is surprised at the amusive appearance; is ready to suspect, that the column rises, like some enchanted edifice, from the rifted earth. But reason looks upon it, as the earnest of a hidden vale, and the sure indication of an adjacent town; performing, in this respect, much the same office to the eye, as faith executes with regard to the soul, when it is “the evidence of things not seen.”*

Next she roves, with increasing pleasure, over spacious tracks of fertile glebe, and cultured fields; where cattle, of every graceful form, and every valuable quality, crop the tender herb, or drink the

* Heb. xi. 1.

crystal rills.—Anon, she dwells with the utmost complacency, on towns of opulence and splendour; which spread the sacred dome, and lift the social roof: towns, no longer surrounded with the stern forbidding majesty of unpassable intrenchments, and impregnable ramparts; but encircled with the delicate, the inviting appendages of gardens and orchards: those, decked with all the soft graces of art and elegance; these, blushing and pregnant with the more substantial treasures of fruitful nature.—Wreaths of ascending smoke, intermingled with turrets and lofty pinnacles, seem to contend which shall get farthest from the earth, and nearest to the skies. Happy for the inhabitants! if such was the habitual tendency of their desires,* if no other contention was known in their streets.

Villas, elegant and magnificent, seated in the centre

* This comparison, I think, cannot appear vulgar to those persons who have read, and who reverence, the book of Canticles. There the church, ascending continually in devout affections, to her beloved Jesus, and to her heavenly home, is characterized by this very similitude: "Who is this that cometh out of the wilderness like pillars of smoke?" Cant. iii. 6.—Though it must be confessed, that this similitude, like many of the illustrations used in scripture, might have a sort of local propriety; peculiar to the people of that age, country, and religion. It might probably refer to those columns of smoke, which arose from the burnt-offering, or fumed from the altar of incense. If so, this circumstance must give a solemnity and dignity to the idea, of which many readers are not at all aware, and which indeed no modern reader can fully conceive.

May I take leave to mention another comparison of this kind? "The enemies of the Lord shall consume even as the fat of lambs; yea, even as the smoke shall they consume away." Psa. xxxvii. 20.—As the fat of lambs, is not to us a striking representation; but to those who attended the altar, who saw the unctuous and most combustible parts of the victim blazing in the sacred fire, it presented a very lively image. Which was still more apposite and significant, if the psalm was sung, while the sacrifice was burning.—None, I believe, in such a case, could forbear observing or admiring the beautiful gradation: "They shall perish as yonder fat, which is so easily set on fire; and, when once in a flame, is so speedily consumed. Nay, they shall be as the smoke, which is still more transient. Whose light unsubstantial wreaths, but just make their appearance to the eye; and, in a moment, vanish into empty air."

Comparative happiness.

of an ample park, or removed to the extremity of a lengthened lawn; not far from a beautiful reservoir of standing waters, or the more salutary lapse of a limpid stream. Villages, clad in homely thatch, and lodged in the bosom of clustering trees. Rustics, singing at their works; shepherds, tuning their pipes, as they tend their flocks; travellers pursuing each his respective way, in easy and joyous security.

How pleasing, said Aspasio, is our situation! How delightful is the aspect of all things! One would almost imagine, that nothing could exceed it, and that nothing can increase it. Yet there is a method of increasing even this copious delight, and of heightening even this exquisite pleasure.—Let me desire my friend, answered Theron, to explain his remark; and not only to explain, but to exemplify.—If we review, resumed Aspasio, our own prosperous, and compare it with the afflicted condition of others, the method I propose will be reduced to practice. Such a dark and mournful contrast must throw additional brightness, even upon the brightest scene.

Above, the skies smile with serenity; below, the fields look gay with plenty; all around, the sportive gales,

Fanning their oderiferous wings, dispense
Native perfumes; and whisper, whence they stole
Those balmy spoils.*

With us all circumstances are as easy, as the wafure of the boat; as smooth, as the flow of the stream.—But let us not forget those grievous calamities, which befall our brethren, in some remote tracts of the earth, or distant parts of the ocean. How many sailors are struggling, vainly struggling, with all the fury of rending winds, and dashing waves! while their vessel, flung to and fro by tempestuous billows, is mounted into the clouds, or plunged into the abyss. Possibly, the miserable crew, hear their knell sounded

* Milton, Book IV.

Comparative happiness.

in the shattered mast ; and see destruction entering at the bursting planks. Perhaps, this very moment, they pour the last, dismal, dying shriek ; and sink, irrecoverably sink, in the all-overwhelming surge.—The traveller in Africa's barren wastes, pale even amidst those glowing regions, pale with prodigious consternation, sees sudden and surprising mountains rise. Sees the sultry desert, ascending the sky, and sweeping before the whirlwind. What can he do? Whither fly? How escape the approaching ruin? Alas! while he attempts to rally his thoughts ; attempts to devise some feeble expedient ; he is overtaken by the choking storm, and suffocated amidst the sandy inundation. The driving heaps are now his executioner, as the drifted heaps will soon be his tomb.

While we possess the valuable privileges, and taste the delicious sweets of liberty, how many partakers of our common nature, are condemned to perpetual exile, or chained to the oar for life! How many are immured in the gloom of dungeons, or buried in the caverns of the mines ; never to behold the all-enlivening sun again! —While respect waits upon our persons, and reputation attends our characters ; are there not some unhappy creatures, led forth by the hand of vindictive justice, to be spectacles of horror, and monuments of vengeance? Sentenced, for their enormous crimes, to be broke limb by limb on the wheel, or to be impaled alive on the lingering stake. To these, the strangling cord, or the deadly stab, would be a most welcome favour. But they must feel a thousand deaths, in undergoing one. And this, too probably, is but the beginning of their sorrows ; will only consign them over to infinitely more terrible torment.—While ease and pleasure, in sweet conjunction, smooth our paths, and soften our couch ; how many are tossing on the fever's fiery bed, or toiling along affliction's thorny road! Some, under the excruciating, but necessary operations of surgery : their bodies ripped open, with a dreadful incision, to search for the torturing stone ;

or their limbs lopped off by the bloody knife, to prevent the mortification's fatal spread. Some emaciated by pining sickness, are deprived of all their animal vigour; and transformed into spectres, even before their dissolution.* These are ready to adopt the complaint of the psalmist; "I am withered like grass; my bones are burnt up, as it were a firebrand; I go hence like the shadow that departeth." While health, that staple blessing; which gives every other entertainment its flavour and its beauty, adds the gloss to all we see, and the goût to all we taste; health plays at our hearts; dances in our spirits; and mantles in our cheeks, as the generous champaign lately sparkled in our glass.

We are blest with a calm possession of ourselves; with tranquillity in our consciences, and an habitual harmony in our temper. Whereas many, in the doleful cells of lunacy, are gnashing their teeth, or wringing their hands; rending the air with volleys of horrid execrations; or burdening it with peals of disconsolate sighs. And O! what multitudes are held in splendid vassallage, even amidst courts and palaces, by their own domineering passions, or the vanities of a bewitching world. Far less innocently, far more deplorably disordered,† than the fettered madman, they are

* A very little excursion of thought will easily convince the reader, that there is no period of time, in which some of these calamities do not befall our fellow-creatures, in one part of the world or another.

† "Give me any plague," says an apocryphal writer, "but the plague of the heart." *Ecclus. xxv. 13.* Upon which judicious and weighty apothegm, Masinissa's speech in *Mr. Thomson's Sophonisba*, is a very pertinent and affecting paraphrase.

O! save me from the tumult of the soul!
 From the wild beast within!—For, circling sands,
 When the swift whirlwind whelms them o'er the lands;
 The roaring deeps, that to the clouds arise,
 While thwarting thick the mingled lightning flies;
 The monster-brood, to which this land gives birth,
 The blazing city, and the gaping earth;
 All deaths, all tortures, in one pang combin'd,
 Are gentle to the tempest of the mind.

Happiness may be augmented,

gnawed by the envenomed tooth of envy; they are agitated by the wild sallies of ambition; or feel the malignant ulcer of jealousy, rankling in their breasts. In some, avarice, like a ravening harpy, gripes. In some, revenge, like an implacable fury, rages. While others are goaded by lordly and imperious lusts, through the loathsome sewers of impure delight; and left, at last, in those hated and execrable dens, where remorse rears her snaky crest, and infamy sharpens her hissing tongue.—

Why this long pause? replied Theron. Your observations are as useful, as they are just. We should all be acquainted, at least in speculation, acquainted with grief; and send our thoughts, if not our feet, to visit the abodes of sorrow. That, in this school, we may learn a sympathizing pity for our distressed fellow-creatures; and see, in this glass, our inexpressible obligations to the distinguishing goodness of Providence. Which has crowned our table with abundance, and replenished our cup with delicacies; permitting neither penury to stint the draught, nor adversity to mingle her gall.—Go on, I must intreat you, with your description of comparative felicity. We have a large circuit still to make, before we arrive at our intended port. And I could wish, that your discourse might keep pace with the current.

Since you approve the subject, answered Aspasio, I will pursue it a little farther.—We, the inhabitants of this favoured isle, breathe an air of the most agreeable temperature, and most wholesome qualities.—But how many nations languish under brazen skies, vaulted as it were with fire? They welter amidst those furnaces of the sun, till their “visage is burnt, and as black as a coal.”*—What is far more disastrous, beds of sulphur and combustible materials, lie in subterraneous ambush, ready to spring the irresistible mine. Ere long—perhaps, on some day of univer-

* Lam. iv. 8.

by comparing our situation with others less favoured.

sal festivity,* or in some night of deep repose—to be touched by heaven's avenging hand. Then, with what outrageous violence will they burst! rock the foundations of nature! wrench open the ponderous jaws of earth! and swallow up astonished cities, in the dark, tremendous, closing chasm!

These earthquakes, it may be, both precede and portend, “the pestilence that walketh in darkness, and the sickness that destroyeth at noon-day.† They are, at once, a fearful omen, and a ruinous blow. The stagnating atmosphere, rank with malignant vapours, becomes a source of deadly infection; or, replete with poisonous animalcules, is one vast incumbent cloud of living bane. If the active gales arise, they arise only to stir the seeds of disease, and diffuse the fatal contagion far and near.—Unhappy people! The plague, that severe minister of divine indignation, fixes her head-quarters in their blasted provinces; and sends death abroad, on his pale horse,‡ to empty their houses, depopulate their towns, and crowd their graves.

Our island is seldom visited with either of these dreadful judgments; and has never sustained any very considerable calamity from the former. However,

* There is a remarkable passage in Psalm lviii. 19. which seems to denote some such unexpected, but speedy and inevitable doom. It is obscured, not a little, by the version admitted into our liturgy. I believe, the true translation may be seen in the following italics, and the true sense learnt from the interwoven paraphrase.—Speedily, or *before your pots can perceive the warmth of blazing thorns, shall he* that ruleth over all, sweep away the wicked; *sweep him away by a stroke of righteous indignation*, as by a fierce and mighty tempest; so that, *even from the fulness of his sufficiency*, and the height of his *prosperity*, he shall be plunged into utter destruction.—The word *וַיְהִי*, which is very unhappily rendered *raw*, signifies a state of prosperity or pleasurable enjoyment. 1 Sam. xxv. 6.—The whole verse, in a gradation of striking images, gives us a most awful display of divine vengeance. Vengeance quite sudden, utterly irresistible, and overtaking the secure sinner, amidst all the caresses of, what the world calls, fortune.

† Psa. xci. 6.

‡ Rev. vi. 8.

Happiness may be augmented,

let us not be presumptuously secure. We have, not long ago, received an awful warning. The rod has been shaken, or rather the sword has been brandished, over our territories.—Who can forget the general consternation, which seized our metropolis, on occasion of the late earthquake? And not without reason. For, of all divine visitations, this is the most terribly vindictive. The whirlwind is slow in its progress; war is gentle in its assaults; even the raging pestilence is a mild rebuke; compared with the inevitable, the all-overwhelming fury of an earthquake. When it begins, it also makes an end;* puts a period, in a few minutes, to the work of ages; ruins all, without distinction; and there is no defence from the destructive stroke.

Should almighty vengeance stir up again those fierce subterranean commotions; should the most high God bid strong convulsions tear the bowels of nature, and make the foundations of the world tremble like a leaf: what, “O ye careless ones,”† what will you do? whither will you fly?—See! the pavement sinks under your feet. Your houses are tottering over your heads. The ground, on every side, cracks and opens like a gaping grave; or heaves and swells like a rolling sea. “A noise of crashing,”‡ is heard from without, occasioned by the rending streets, and falling structures. Thunders, infernal thunders,§ bellow from beneath; mingled with despairing shrieks, and dying groans from those wretched creatures, who are jammed between the closing earth, or going down alive into the horrible pit,||—Where now will you fly! To your strong

* 1 Sam. iii. 12.

† Isa. xxxii. 11.

‡ Zeph. i. 10.

§ Before the overthrow of Catania by an earthquake, a noise was heard, vast and horrid, as if all the artillery in the world was discharged at once.

|| Very memorable, and equally tremendous, is the account of the earthquake, that visited Sicily, in the year 1693.—It shook the whole island. The mischief it caused, is amazing. Fifty-four cities and towns, besides an incredible number of villages, were either demo-

by comparing our situation with others less favoured.

towers? They are shattered in pieces.—To the stronger rocks? They are thrown out of their place.—To the open fields? They are a frightful gulf, yawning to devour you. Wherever you fly; in the wildness of your distraction, wherever you seek for shelter; it shall be, “as if a man fled from a lion, and a bear met him; or went into the house, and leaned his hand upon the wall, and a serpent bit him.”*

Yet there is one place of refuge, which will prove an inviolable sanctuary, and a perfect security. I mean, the great, the gracious, the adorable Redeemer’s righteousness. Hither, let us betake ourselves. Now, before the day of desolation cometh,

lished, or greatly damaged. Catania, one of the most famous and flourishing cities in the kingdom, was entirely destroyed. Of 18,914 inhabitants, 18,000 perished.

Another earthquake almost as dreadful, and in the same year, spread desolation through the colony of Jamaica. In two minutes’ time it shook down, and laid under water, nine-tenths of the town of Port-Royal. In less than a minute, three quarters of the houses, and the ground they stood on, together with the inhabitants, were quite sunk; and the little part left behind, was no better than heaps of rubbish. The shake was so violent, that it threw people down upon their knees, or their faces, as they were running about for shelter. The ground heaved and swelled, like a rolling sea; and several houses, still standing, were shuffled some yards out of their places. The earth would crack and yawn; would open and shut, quick and fast. Of which horrid openings, two or three hundred might be seen at once; in some whereof, the people went down, and were seen no more. In some they descended, and rose again in other streets, or in the middle of the harbour. Some swiftly closing, seized the miserable creatures and pressed them to death; leaving their heads, or half their bodies, above ground, to be a spectacle of terror, and a prey to dogs. Out of others would issue whole rivers of water, spouted to a great height in the air, and threatening a deluge to that part, which the earthquake spared.—Scarce a planting-house or sugar-work was left standing in all the island. Two thousand lives were lost, and a thousand acres of land sunk. The whole was attended with frightful noises, with brimstone blasts, and offensive smells. The noisome vapours, belched forth, corrupted the air, and brought on a general sickness, which swept away more than three thousand of those who escaped the fury of the earthquake. See Chamb. Dict. on the word earthquake.

* Amos v. 19.

Happiness may be augmented,

let us betake ourselves to this strong hold. Then shall we have no reason to fear, though the earth be moved, and though the hills be carried into the midst of the sea. For thus saith God, the omnipotent and faithful God; "The sun and moon shall be darkened, and the stars withdraw their shining. The Lord also shall roar out of Zion, and utter his voice from Jerusalem. The heavens and the earth shall shake; but the Lord Jesus Christ will be the hope of his people, and the strength of the children of Israel."*—Or, if the true believer is involved in the same undistinguished ruin with the ungodly; even this shall turn to his gain. It shall exempt him from the lingering pains, and the melancholy solemnities, of a dying bed. Like Elijah's fiery chariot, it shall speedily waft his soul to the bosom of his Saviour. While the hideous cavern, that whelms his body in the centre, shall be its chamber of rest, till the beloved Bridegroom comes, and the day of resurrection dawns.

We lift up our eyes, and behold the radiant colours which flush the forehead of the morning: we turn, and gaze upon the no less beautiful tinges, which impurple the cheek of evening. We throw around our view, and are delighted with numberless forms of fertility, which both decorate and enrich our plains.—Whereas, other countries are over-run with immense swarms of locusts; which intercept, wherever they fly, the fair face of day; and destroy, wherever they alight, the green treasures of the ground.

Ah! what avails it, that the laborious hind sows his acres, or the skilful husbandman prunes his vineyard? that spring, with her prolific moisture, swells the bud; or, with her delicate pencil, paints the blossom? Nor grain, nor fruit, can hope for maturity, while these rapacious and baleful creatures infest the neighbourhood. They ravage the gardens. They strip the trees, and shave the meadows. Scarce a single leaf remains on the boughs, or so much as a

* Joel iii. 15, 16.

by comparing our situation with others less favoured.

single stalk in the furrows. "A fire devoureth before them, and behind them a flame burneth: the land is as the garden of Eden before them, and behind them a desolate wilderness; yea, and nothing can escape them."*

Now, let the dreadful artillery roar from all its iron throats, and disgorge the heaviest glut of mortal hail.—Now, ye sons of slaughter, men "skilful to destroy,"† now hurl the sulphurous globes, which kindle into a hurricane of fire, and burst in ragged instruments of ruin.—To no purpose. The linked thunderbolts are turned into stubble, the bursting bombs are accounted as straw. These armies of the air laugh at all the formidable preparations of war; "and when they fall on the sword, they shall not be wounded."‡—Surprising and awful destination of the everlasting God! at once, to stain the pride, and chastise the guilt of man! These are a despicable and puny race; clad in no coat of mail, but crushed by the slightest touch. They wear neither sword nor

* "A fire devoureth before them, and behind them a flame burneth," Joel ii. 3. This is one of those bold and expressive metaphors, in which the Hebrew language delights, and by which it is eminently distinguished. It signifies a total devastation of the vegetable produce; such as must ensue, if a raging and resistless fire attended the progress of these pernicious animals; burning with such vehement impetuosity, that none could quench it: spreading such extensive havoc, that nothing could escape it.

† Ezek. xxi. 31.

‡ The prophet Joel, foretelling the plague of locusts, gives under the image of an embattled host, a most alarming display of their terrible appearance; their impetuous progress; the horrible dread they raise, as they advance; and the irreparable mischief they leave, as they depart, adding among other amazing circumstances, "When they fall upon the sword, they shall not be wounded." Which implies, I apprehend, that no method of slaughter should prove destructive to their troops; or, that every expedient, contrived for their suppression, should be utterly baffled: being, through their immense numbers, as invincible, as if every one was absolutely invulnerable. For, though millions and millions should perish by the weapons of war; even such a blow, in reference to their whole collective body, should scarce be perceived as a loss, scarce be felt as a wound; neither diminishing their strength, nor retarding their march, Joel ii. 8.

Happiness may be augmented,

scymitar, nor any offensive weapon. Yet in spite of opposing legions, they carry on their depredations, and push their conquests. Terror marches in their front, and famine brings up the rear. They spread universal devastation, as they advance; and frequently give the signal for the pestilence to follow. Potent armies lose their hands, and haughty tyrants tremble for their dominions.

O! that the natives of Great Britain would bethink themselves! would break off their sins by righteousness, and their iniquities, by cherishing the influences of the divine Spirit! lest this “overflowing scourge,”* under which some neighbouring kingdoms have severely smarted, should be commissioned to visit our borders, and avenge the quarrel of its Maker’s honour.—Distant as those countless legions are, with interposing seas between; yet, if God lift up a standard from far, or but hiss† unto them from the ends of the

* “Overflowing scourge,” Isa. xxviii. 15. It is the property of a scourge to lash, of a river to overflow. The sacred writer (by an elegant *παρονομασια*, which beautifies the original, but cannot be preserved in the translation) has connected these different ideas and different effects. The vindictive visitation, with which he threatens the disobedient Jews, shall pierce deep as a scourge, and spread wide as an inundation. They shall feel it to their very souls; and it shall involve the whole nation in misery, anguish, and ruin.

There seems to be such a form of expression in the service of our church; when we pray, in behalf of our fellow-christians; “Pour on them the continual dew of thy blessing; that which may be refreshing and salutary as the dew, yet copious and abundant as the shower.

† “Hiss unto them,” Isa. v. 26. With great significancy, and peculiar grandeur, the prophet applies this expression to the Lord God of hosts, influencing the most powerful armies: q. d. “They come, without a moment’s delay, and from the remotest regions of the earth, to execute all his pleasure. Formidable and innumerable as they are, they come,—I say, not upon his repeated injunctions, or at his strict command, but at the first, the very smallest intimation of his will;” such as the shepherds used to their flocks; such as the bee-men of old, to their swarms; or such as we, in these days, to some of our domestic animals.—The Hebrew שׂרַק I would not translate, at his whistle; because this phrase, in our language, creates a vulgar sound, and conveys a low idea; but such is the import of the original; which denotes all that unconcerned ease of action, without any of the offensive familiarity of diction.

by comparing our situation with others less favoured.

earth, "they come with speed swiftly."—Who will convey this wish to the ears, who will transmit it to the hearts of my countrymen; that our land may always appear, as it does at present, like the darling of Providence; may always resound with the voice of joy, and be filled with the fruits of plenty; may always wear the robe of beauty, and be adorned with the smile of peace.

How great are the advantages of peace! said Theron. Peace, at her leisure, plans, and leads out industry to execute, all the noble and commodious improvements, which we behold on every side. Peace sets the mark of property on our possessions, and bids justice guarantee them to our enjoyment. Peace spreads over us the banner of the laws, while we taste, free from outrage, and secure from injury, the milk and honey of our honest toil.*—Amidst the tumultuous confusions of war, who could have a heart to contrive, or a hand to accomplish, any such works of dignity and use; in those days of darkness and distraction, how languid to the sight are all the dewy landscapes of spring? How insipid to the taste are all the delicious flavours of autumn?—When the nation is over-run with armies, and embroiled in slaughter, "a trembling heart, and failing of eyes, and sorrow of mind,"† are the dismal distinction of the times.

* "Pax optimum rerum," says the Latin poet.—But the Orientals, I think, discover the most superlative esteem for this blessing, by making it the constant form of their salutations, and the subject of their most cordial wishes for their friends; "Peace be unto thee."—In this short sentence, they seem to have comprised a whole volume of mercies, meaning by their single פְּלוּ all that the Greeks expressed by their *χαραιν, υψιαιων, ευπραθειν*: i. e. a confluence of that joy of mind, that health of body, that prosperity of outward circumstances, which complete the happiness of mankind.

We have a fine description of peace, and its various blessings, 1 Maccab. xiv. 8, 9, &c. The picture is very exact, though perfectly artless. Nothing should hinder me from transcribing the passage, but a fear of being too diffusive in my notes. Lest the reader, who expects a treat, should complain of a glut; or have reason to object, that the side-board is more copiously furnished than the table.

† Deut. xxviii. 65.

A celebration of the gospel and its blessings,

Instead of a calm acquiescence of our portion, our very life hangs in continual suspense.

But what are all the benefits of external peace, though displayed in the fairest light, and enlivened by the strongest contrasts?—What are they all, compared with the blessings of the gospel; by which sinners may have “peace with God through Jesus Christ our Lord?”

This, resumed Aspasio, suggests a fresh instance of happiness, which others want, and we possess; an instance never to be omitted in our catalogue of peculiar mercies; I might add, never to be forgotten, by any christian, on any occasion.—While many kingdoms of the earth are ignorant of the true God, and know neither the principles of piety, nor the paths of felicity, “the day-spring from on high hath visited us, to give the knowledge of salvation, and to guide our feet into the way of peace.”—While millions of rebellious angels, cast from their native thrones, are reserved in chains of darkness, unto the judgment of the great day; we, though rebellious and apostate sinners of mankind, are delivered from the wrath to come. The holy Jesus (blessed be his redeeming goodness!) has endured the cross, and despised the shame, on purpose to rescue us from those doleful and ignominious dungeons; where the prisoners of almighty vengeance

—————Converse with groans,
Unrespited, unpitied, unrepriev'd,
Ages of hopeless end.*

Yes, my dear Theron; let me repeat your own important words; “What are all the benefits of external peace, though displayed in the fairest light, and enlivened by the strongest contrasts; what are they all, compared with the blessings of the gospel?”—This brings the olive-branch from heaven, and glad tidings of reconciliation with our offended God. This

* Milton.

as transcending every earthly advantage.

composes the tumult of the mind; disarms the warring passions; and regulates the extravagant desires. This introduces such an integrity of heart, and benevolence of temper, as constitute the health of the soul. This spreads such an uniform beauty of holiness through the conduct, as is far more amiable than the most engaging forms of material nature.

Oh! that thou wouldst bow the heavens! that thou wouldst come down, celestial visitant; and make thy stated, thy favourite abode in our isle! that every breast may be animated with thy power; and every community, every individual, may wear thy resplendent badge!—Then shall it be the least ingredient of our public felicity, that the sword of slaughter is beaten into a plough-share, and the once bloody spear, bent into a pruning-hook. It shall be the lowest upon the list of our common blessings, that “violence is no more heard in our land, wasting and destruction within our borders. Our very officers will be peace, and our exactors righteousness.* We shall call (and the event will correspond with the name) our walls salvation, and our gates praise.” Then shall every harp be taken down from the willows, and every voice burst into a song.—“In other climes” will be the general acclamation—

“In other climes, let myriads of curious insects, spin the delicate thread, which softens into velvet,

* Isa. lx. 17. Officers and exactors signify persons vested with public authority; who have it in their power to rule with rigour. But these, instead of abusing their power, shall conduct the administration with all possible equity and gentleness; with a paternal tenderness, rather than a magisterial austerity. So that though the title and office of exactor may remain; nothing of the domineering insolence, or oppressive severity, shall continue.—The prophet, who always delivers his sentiments with the utmost emphasis, says, They shall be, not barely peaceable and righteous, but possessed of these qualities in the highest degree. Or, which implies more than any other words can express, they shall be peace and righteousness itself.—The same beautiful figure is used in the next clause, which describes the inviolable security of the city, together with the universal joy and piety of the inhabitants.

A celebration of the gospel and its blessings,

stiffens into brocade, or flows in glossy satin; which reflects a lovelier glow on the cheek of beauty, and renders royalty itself more majestic. We are presented with the infinitely-finer robes, in the imputed righteousness of our Redeemer, and the inherent sanctification of his Spirit; which beautify the very soul, and prepare it for the illustrious assembly—of saints in light,—of angels in glory.

“Let eastern rocks sparkle with diamonds, and give birth to gems of every dazzling tincture. We have hid in the field of our scriptures, the Pearl of great price; the white and precious stone of perfect absolution;* a diadem, which will shine with undiminished lustre, when all the brilliant wonders of the mine are faded, extinguished, lost.

“Let richer soils nourish the noblest plants, and warmer suns concoct their exquisite juices; the lemon, pleasingly poignant; the citron, more mildly delicious; or that pride of vegetable life, and compendium of all the blandishments of taste, the pineapple. We enjoy far more exalted dainties, in having access to the ‘Tree of life, whose leaves are for the healing of the nations;’† whose boughs are replenished with a never-failing abundance of heavenly fruits; and the nutriment they dispense, is bliss and immortality.

“Let Iberian vines swell the translucent cluster, and burst into a flood of generous wine: let the Tuscan olive extract the fatness of the earth, and melt into a soft mellifluous stream. We shall neither envy nor covet these inferior gifts, so long as we may draw water out of the wells of salvation; so long as we may receive that ‘unction from the Holy One,”‡ those influences of the Comforter, which not only make a cheerful countenance, but gladden the very heart; imparting such a refined satisfaction, as the whole world cannot give; such a permanent satisfaction, as no calamities can take away.

* Rev. ii. 17.

† Rev. xxii. 2.

‡ 1 John ii. 20.

as transcending every earthly advantage.

“ Let Ethiopian mountains be ribbed with marble, and Peruvian mines embowelled with gold. We want neither the impenetrable quarry, nor the glittering ore ; having in our adored Messiah, a sure foundation for all our eternal hopes, and an inexhaustible fund of the divinest riches.

“ Be it so, that our Isis is but a creeping drop, and the Thames itself no more than a scanty rivulet, compared with the magnificent sweep of the Ganges, or the stupendous amplitude of Rio de la Plata.* The wretched natives, even on the banks of those stately rivers, are at a distance from the springs of true consolation. Whereas we have a fountain, we have a river, that issues from the ocean of eternal love.— With incomparable dignity, and with equal propriety, it is styled ‘ the river of life.’† It visits the house of the mourner, and revives the spirit of the sorrowful. It makes glad the city, and makes happy the servants of our God. It quickens even the dead ; and every human creature, that drinks of its water, lives for ever.

“ Let Asiatic islands boast their mountains of myrrh, and hills of frankincense : let Arabian groves, with a superior liberality, distil their healing gums ; and ripen, for vigorous operation, their vital drugs. We have a more sovereign remedy, than their most powerful restoratives, in the great Mediator’s atoning

* This river is near two hundred miles broad, where it discharges itself into the sea. It pours such an immense quantity of the liquid element into the Atlantic ocean, that fresh water may be taken up for the space of many a league. It continues thus amazingly vast through a course of six hundred miles ; when it divides into two mighty branches, the Parana and the Paraguay ; which, having run in separate channels, several thousand miles along the country, unite at last ; and form, by their conflux, this magnificent and spacious stream ; which is supposed to be the very largest in the world. To conceive a proper idea of its prodigious dimensions, we may imagine a current of waters, taking its rise beyond Jerusalem ; and, after having received all the rivers of Europe into its capacious bed, making its entry on the British ocean, by a mouth extended from Dover to Bristol!

† Rev. xxii. 1.

blood. We have a more refreshing banquet, than all their mingled sweets, in commemorating his passion, and participating his merits.

“In short, we have an equivalent, far more than an equivalent, for all those choice productions, which bloom in the gardens, or bask in the orchards of the sun. We have a gospel, rich in precious privileges, and abounding with inestimable promises; we have a Saviour, full of forgiving goodness, and liberal of renewing grace. At whose auspicious approach, fountains spout amidst the burning desert; under whose welcome footsteps, the sandy waste smiles with herbage; and beneath his potent touch, ‘the wilderness buds and blossoms as a rose.’* Or, to speak more plainly, the desolate and barren soul brings forth those fruits of the Spirit, which are infinitely more ornamental than the silken gems of spring; infinitely more beneficial than the salubrious stores of autumn.

“We have a Saviour,—tell it out among the heathen, that all the nations on earth may partake of the gift, and join in the song,—a Saviour we have, whose radiant eye brightens the gloomy paths of affliction; whose efficacious blessing makes ‘all things work together for the good’ of his people.† Death, gilded by his propitious smile, even death itself looks gay. Nor is the grave, under his benign administration, any longer a den of destruction; but a short and shady avenue to those immortal mansions, whose foundations are laid with sapphires, whose windows are of agate, the gates of carbuncle, and all the borders of pleasant stones.”‡

Pardon my rhapsody, dear Theron. Your own remark, added to the grand and lovely views, have warmed, have animated, have almost transported me.—Theron answered not a word; but seemed fixed in thought.—While he is indulging his contemplation, we may just observe some other peculiarities of the prospect.

* Isa. xxxv. 1.

† Rom. viii. 28.

‡ Isa. liv. 11, 12.

An ancient monastery.

Here and there, a lonesome cottage scarcely lifts its humble head. No pompous swell of projecting steps surrounds the door; no appendant wings of inferior offices skirt the edifice; no stately hall, slabbed with marble, and roofed with sculpture, receives the gazing stranger. But young-eyed health, and white-robed innocence, with sweet-featured contentment, adorn the habitation. While virtue lends her graces, and religion communicates her honours, to dignify the abode; rendering the blameless hut superior, in real majesty, to a dissolute court.

At some distance, appear the hoary remains of an ancient monastery. Sunk beneath the weight of revolving years, the once venerable fabric is levelled with the dust. The lofty and ornamented temple lies rudely overgrown with moss, or still more ignobly covered with weeds. The walls, where sainted imagery stood, or idolized painting shone, are clasped with twining ivy, or shagged with horrid thorn.—Through aisles, that once echoed to the chanter's voice, mingled with the organ's majestic sound, the hollow winds roar, and the dashing storm drives.—Where are now the silent cells, the vocal choirs, the dusky groves, in which the romantic saints prolonged their lonely vigil by the midnight taper; or poured their united prayers, before the lark had waked the morn, or strolled in ever-musing melancholy, along the moon-light glade. Surely those mouldering fragments now teach, (and with a much better grace, with a much stronger emphasis,) what formerly their unsocial and gloomy residentiaries professed. They teach the vanity of the world, and the transitory duration of all that is most stable, in this region of shadows.

Behold, on yonder eminence, the rueful memorials of a magnificent castle. All dismantled, and quite demolished, it gives a shading of solemnity to the more lively parts of nature's picture; and attempers the rural delight, with some touches of alarming dread.—War, destructive war, has snatched the scythe from

A demolished castle.

the hand of time, and hurried on the steps of destiny. Those broken columns, and battered walls; those prostrate towers, and battlements dashed to the ground, carry evident marks of a premature downfall. They were built for ages, and for ages might have stood, a defence and accommodation to generations yet unborn, if haply they had escaped the dire assaults of hostile rage. But what vigilance of man can prevent the miner's dark approach? Or what solidity of bulwark can withstand the bellowing engine's impetuous shock?

Those, perhaps, where the rooms, in which licentious Mirth crowned with roses the sparkling bowl, and tuned to the silver-sounding lute the syren's enchanting song. Those, the scenes of voluptuous indulgence, where Luxury poured her delicacies; where Beauty, insidious Beauty, practised her wiles; and spread with bewitching art, her wanton snares. Now, instead of the riotous banquet, and intrigues of lawless love, the owl utters her hated screams by night, and the raven flaps her ominous wing by day.—Where are the violet couches, and the woodbine bowers, which fanned, with their breathing sweets, the polluted flame? The soil seems to suffer for the abuses of the owner. Blasted and dishonoured, it produces nothing but ragged briars, and noisome nettles; under whose odious covert the hissing snake glides, or the croaking toad crawls.—Fearful intimation of that ignominious and doleful catastrophe, which awaits the sons of riot! when their momentary gratifications will drop, like the faded leaf, and leave nothing behind but pangs of remorse, keener far, than the pointed thorn, and more envenomed than the viper's tooth.

Perhaps they were the beauteous and honoured abodes, where Grandeur and Politeness walked their daily round, attended with a train of guiltless delights: where amiable and refined Friendship was wont to sit and smile, looking love, and talking with the very soul: where Hospitality, with Economy always at her

Relief of common beggars, no charity.

side, stood beckoning to the distressed but industrious poor;* and showered blessings from her liberal hand.

* I say distressed, but industrious poor;—because I would not be understood as encouraging, in any degree, the relief of our common beggars.—Towards the former, I would cultivate a tender and ever yearning compassion; I would anticipate their complaints; and, as a sacred writer directs, would even “seek to do them good.”—But as to the latter, I frankly own that I look upon it as my duty to discourage such camberers of the ground. They are, generally speaking, lusty drones; and their habitual begging is no better than a specious robbing of the public hive. For such sturdy supplicants who are able to undergo the fatigue of travelling; able to endure the inclemencies of the weather; and, consequently, much more able, were they equally willing, to exercise themselves in some species of laudable industry;—for these, the house of correction would be a far more salutary provision, than any supply from our table; and confinement to labour, a much more beneficial charity than the liberality of the purse.

We should remember, that they should be taught that the law ordained by the court of heaven, is, “If any man will not work, neither shall he eat.” If then we contribute to support them in idleness, do we not counteract and frustrate this wise regulation, established by the great Sovereign of the universe?—Is it not also a wrong to the deserving poor, if we suffer these wens on the body politic to draw off the nourishment which ought to circulate among the valuable and useful members?—Money or victuals, bestowed on these worthless wretches, is not real beneficence, but the earnest-penny of sloth. It hires them to be good for nothing: and pays them for being public nuisances.

Let us then unanimously join to shake off these dead weights from our wheels, and dislodge these swarms of vermin from our state. Let us be deaf to their most importunate clamours; and assure ourselves, that by this determined inflexibility, we do God, we do our community, we do them, the most substantial service.—Should they implore by the injured name of Jesus; for the honour of the Lord Jesus let us withhold our alms. Their meaning is,—“I cannot go on in my present shameful and iniquitous course, I can no longer continue to act the wicked and slothful servant, unless you will administer some kindly pernicious assistance. For Christ’s sake, therefore, assist me to dishonour my Christian name, and to live more infamously than the vilest beasts. For Christ’s sake help me to be a reproach and burden to my native country; and to persist in the way which leads to eternal destruction.”—This is the true import of their petitions. And whether the sanction of that most venerable name, added to such a request, should move our commiseration or excite our abhorrence, let every thinking person judge.

I trust the reader will be so candid as to excuse this long digressive note, and do me the justice to believe, that I am not pleading

Riches make to themselves wings, and fly away.

—But war, detested war, has stretched over the social and inviting seat, “the line of confusion, and the stones of emptiness.”* Now, alas! nothing but desolation and horror haunt the savage retreat. The ample arches of the bridge, which so often transmitted the wondering passenger along their pensile way, lie buried in the dreary mote.—Those relics of the massy portals, naked and abandoned, seem to bemoan their melancholy condition. No splendid chariots, with their gay retinue, frequent the solitary avenues. No needy steps, with cheerful expectations, besiege the once bountiful gate. But all is a miserable, forlorn, hideous pile of rubbish.

Since riches so often take to themselves wings, and fly away; since houses, great and fair, reel upon their foundations, and so soon tumble into dust; how wise, how salutary, is our divine Master’s advice! “Make to yourselves friends with the mammon of unrighteousness; that when” the world fails around “you,” when the springs of nature “fail” within you, “they,” as witnesses of your charity, and vouchers for the sincerity of your faith, “may receive you into everlasting habitations.”†—This is to lay up treasure for ourselves;‡ whereas, whatever else we amass, is for our heirs, for our successors, for we know not who. This wealth is truly and emphatically called our own:§ it is an advowson; we have the perpetuity. Whereas, whatever else we possess, is ours only for a turn, or in trust.

See the dreadful, dreadful ravages of civil discord! Wherever that infernal fury stalks, she marks her

against, but for the real poor; not to harden any one’s heart, but rather to direct every one’s hand.—Give, out of gratitude to Christ, out of compassion to the needy, and be for blessed: but give not to incorrigible vagrants; to maintain impiety, and pamper indolence; lest it be demanded one day, “Who hath required this at your hand?” Lest, by supporting dissolute creatures in that abandoned sloth, which is the nurse of vice, we become partakers of their guilt, and accessory to their ruin.

* Isa. xxxiv. 11.

† Matt. vi. 20.

‡ Luke xvi. 9.

§ Luke xvi. 12.

The harock of war—the blessings of peace.

steps in blood, and leaves opulent cities a ruinous heap.*—What thanks then, what ardent and ceaseless thanks, are due to that all-superintending, ever-gracious Lord, who has dashed the torch from her hand; has broke her murderous weapons; and driven the baleful pest from our island!—May the same almighty goodness shortly banish the accursed monster from all lands! banish the monster, with her hated associate Rapine, and her insatiable purveyor Ambition, to the deepest hell. Branded with everlasting infamy, and bound in adamantine chains, there let them gnash their teeth, and bite the inevitable curb!—While Peace, descending from her native heaven, bids her olives spring amidst the joyful nations; and Plenty, in league with Commerce, scatters blessings from her copious horn. While Gladness smiles in every eye; and Love, extensive universal love, levelling the

* The effects of what Virgil calls “bella, horrida bella,” were never displayed in colours that glow, and with figures that alarm, like those which are used by the prophet Jeremiah, chap. iv. 19, &c. As this is perhaps the greatest master-piece of the kind, the reader will permit me to enrich the notes with a transcript of the passage.

First we see, or rather we feel, the effects of war on the human mind; the keenest anguish, and the deepest dismay. “My bowels! my bowels! I am pained at my very heart. My heart maketh a noise in me; I cannot hold my peace; because thou hast heard, O my soul, the sound of the trumpet, the alarm of war.—Destruction upon destruction is cried; for the land is spoiled. Suddenly are my tents spoiled, and my curtains in a moment.—How long shall I see the standard, and hear the sound of the trumpet?”

Then we see the dismal devastations of war; and who does not shudder at the sight? the whole country laid in ruins! deprived of all its ornaments, and all its inhabitants! reduced to a solitude and a chaos. “I beheld the earth, and lo! it was without form, and void; and the heavens, and they had no light.—I beheld the mountains, and lo! they trembled, and all the hills moved lightly. I beheld, and lo! there was no man, and all the birds of the heavens were fled.—I beheld, and lo! the fruitful place was a wilderness, and all the cities thereof were broken down, at the presence of the Lord, and by his fierce anger.”

If, after all this profusion of imagery, bold and animated even to astonishment, we can have any relish for the cold correctness of a heathen genius, we may find something of the same nature in Horace, lib. ii. Od. 1.

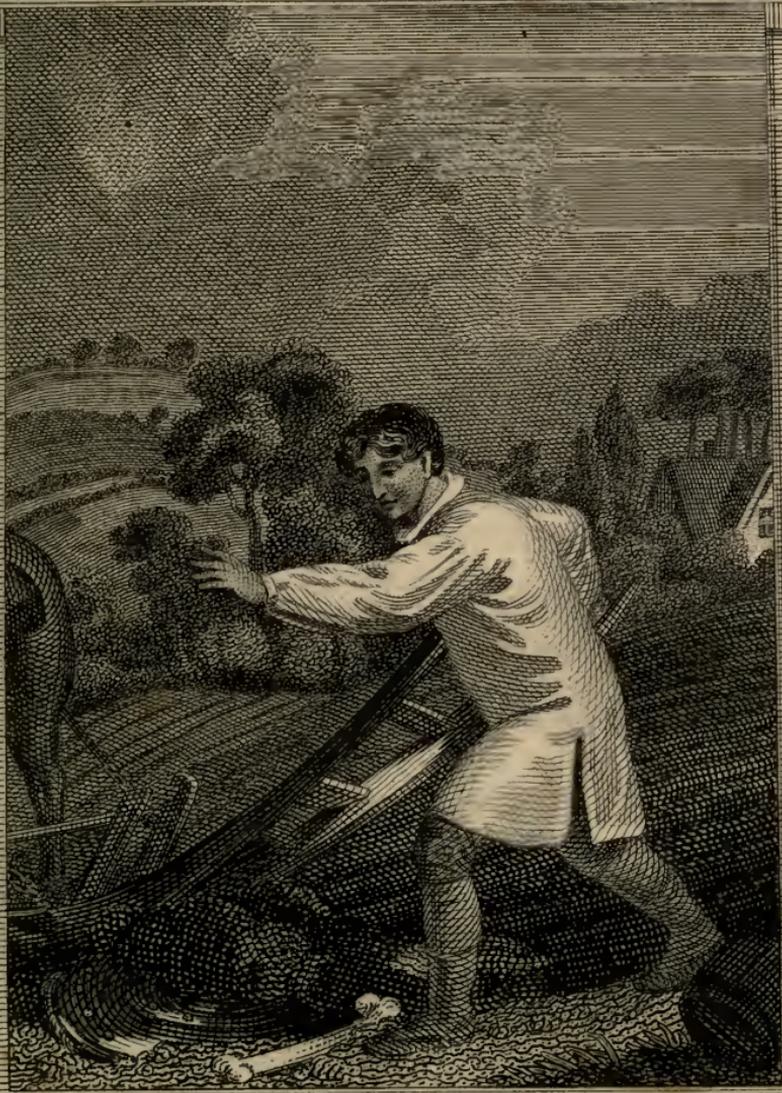
An old warrior relating a battle

partition-wall of bigotry, cements every heart in brotherly affection.

Near those heaps of havock, lies the spot, ever memorable and still revered, on which an obstinate and fatal battle was fought.—The husbandman, as he breaks his fallow land, or rends the grassy turf, often discovers the horrid implements, and the more horrid effects, of that bloody conflict. He starts, to hear his coultter strike upon the bosses of a rusty buckler, or grind over the edge of a blunted sword. He turns pale, to see human bones thrown up before his plough; and stands aghast to think, that, in cutting his furrow he opens a grave. The gray-headed sire often relates to his grandsons, hanging with eager attention on the tale, and trembling for the event; relates the dismal, the glorious deeds of that all-important day.—How the fields, now covered with waving crops, were then loaded with mangled and ghastly corpses. How the pastures, now green with herbage, were then drenched and incrimsoned with human gore.

“On that extended common,” he says, “where the busy shepherd is erecting his hurdled citadel, the tents were spread, and the banners displayed; the spears bristled in air, and the burnished helmets glittered to the sun.—On yonder rising ground, where the frisking lambs play their harmless frolics, stood the martial files, clad in mail, and ranged in battle-array; stood war, with all its collected horrors, like some portentous cloud, ready to burst into an immediate storm.—On the nearer plain, where the quiet steed grazes in safety, and those sober oxen chew the juicy herb, the fierce encounter mixed. There, the javelins, launched from nervous arms, and aimed by vengeful eyes, flew, and reflew, whizzing with death. The arrows lightened from the strings,* and drenched their

* Hab. iii. 11. ברק חניתך literally translated, presents us with that beautifully-bold figure, the lightning of thy spear.—Which, with innumerable other graces of speech, that give dignity and spirit to our modern compositions, are borrowed from the language of Zion;



THE RON & ASPASIO,
Dialogue the Nineteenth.

Craig, del.

Palmer sculp.



to his grandsons.

keen points, and dipped their feathery wings in blood.—Soon as this shower of missive steel ceased, instantly outsprung thousands of flaming swords. They clash on the brazen shields; they cut their way through the riven armour; and sheathe their blades in many a gallant dauntless heart. Here, on this distinguished level, the proud presumptuous enemy, confident of victory, and boasting of their numbers, poured in like a flood. There, a bold determined battalion, of which myself was a part, planted themselves like a rock, and broke the fierce attack.

“Then,” adds the brave old warrior, “then the coward herd fled before the vengeance of our conquering arms. Then these hands strewed the plains with a harvest different far from the present productions. Then the fathers, smitten with inexpressible dread, looked not back on their children,* though shuddering

are transplanted from the school of the prophets.—If we start into a pleasing amazement at Homer’s *δορυ μαινίλαι*; have we not equal reason to be charmed and surprised at Nahum’s *יחזוללו הרכב*? every chariot raged with violence and impetuosity; was eager, was even mad, to destroy. Nah. ii. 5.

* For this very striking, and most terrific image, we are obliged to the prophet Jeremiah; who, in a few words, but with all the pomp of horror, describes the din of approaching war, and the consternation of a vanquished people. “At the noise of the stamping of the hoofs of his strong horses, at the rushing of his chariots, and at the rumbling of his wheels, the fathers shall not look back unto their children, for feebleness of hands.” Jer. xlvii. 3.

Not to mention the thunder-like sound of the diction; and that in a language much less sonorous than the original, I appeal to every reader, whether the last circumstance does not awaken the idea of so tremendous a scene, and so horrible a dread, as no words can express. Virgil has imitated the prophet’s manner in that very delicate descriptive touch, where, representing the prodigious alarm excited by the yell of the infernal fury, he says,

Et trepidæ matres pressere ad pectora natos.

That is, Each affrighted mother clasped the infant to her fluttering bosom.

No one, I believe, need be informed, that the panic is painted, with a very superior energy, by the poet of heaven. In the Pagan’s draught, the effect of fear results from the constitution, and coincides with the bias of humanity. Whereas, in the prophet’s picture, it

Minor beauties are overlooked amidst grander objects.

at the lifted spear, or screaming under the brandished sword. The fathers looked not back on their children, though they fell among the slain, gashed with deadly wounds, or lay expiring, in groans of agony under our feet."

We leave the warrior to repeat his shocking story, and enjoy his savage satisfaction. For calmer scenes, and softer delights, we willingly leave him.—The eye is pleased with the elegant gaiety of the parterre; the ear is soothed with the warbling melody of the grove; but grand objects, and the magnificence of things, charm and transport the whole man. The mind, on such occasions, seems to expand with the prospect, and secretly exults in the consciousness of her greatness. Intent upon these large and excursive views, our friends scarce advert to the minuter beauties which address them on every side. The swan with her snowy plumes and loftily bending head, notwithstanding all her superb air and lordly state, rows by without exciting admiration or obtaining notice.—Equally unnoticed is both the array and the action of the duck; her glossy neck, and finely checkered wings; her diving into the deep, or her darting up into day.—The swallow, skimming the air in wanton circles, or dipping her downy breast in the flood, courts their observation in vain.—Nor could the finny shoals attract their regard, though they played before the boat in sportive chace, or glancing quick to the surface, shewed their pearly coats, bedropt with gold.—Thus they, engaged in sublime, neglect inferior speculations. And if the sons of religion overlook the diminutive, transient, delusory forms of pleasure, which float on the narrow stream of time, or flit along the scanty bounds of sense; it is only to contemplate and enjoy a happiness in their God, which is elevated,

counteracts, it suspends, it entirely overbears, the tenderest working, and strongest propensities of nature; though instigated on one hand, by the most importunate calls of exquisite distress; and stimulated on the other, by all the solicitations of the most yearning compassion.

A vast venerable forest.

substantial, and immortal.—Compared with which, whatever the eye can survey, from pole to pole, from the rising to the setting sun, is a cockle-shell, a butterfly, a bubble.

From this open and enlarged scene, they enter the skirts of a vast, umbrageous, venerable forest.—On either side, the sturdy and gigantic sons of earth, reared their aged trunks, and spread their branching arms. Trees, of every hardy make, and every majestic form, in agreeable disorder, and with a wild kind of grandeur, fill the aerial regions. The huge, expansive, roaming boughs, unite themselves over the current, and diffuse “their umbrage, broad and brown as evening.” The timorous deer start at the clashing of the waves. Alarmed at the unusual sound, they look up, and gaze for a moment; they fly into covert, by various ways, and with precipitate speed; vanishing, rather than departing, from the glade.

How awful to reflect, as they glide along the shelving shores, and the moss-grown banks; as they sail under the pendant shades of quivering poplar, of whistling fir, and the solemn-sounding foliage of the oak,—how awful to reflect; “These were the lonely haunts of the Druids, two thousand years ago. Amidst those dusky mazes, and sympathetic glooms, the pensive sages strayed. Here, they sought, they found, and with all the solemnity of superstitious devotion, they gathered their misletoe.* Here the visionary

* If the reader pleases, he may see these pompous solemnities described in Vanierii Præ. Rust. p. 125, &c. Where the curious narrative of Pliny is embellished with the harmonious numbers of Virgil.—With regard to the reflections occasioned by this account; the compliments lavished on the French, their religion, and their monarch; I believe the judicious Protestant will confess with me, that as our charming author has copied the language, and entered into the spirit of the ancients; he has also caught a tincture of their superstition; imbibing, together with all their elegancies and graces, some of their fanciful and legendary levities.

Verum ubi plura nitent in carmine, non ego paucis
Offendar maculis.

Hor.

The two friends alight at a beautiful lawn.

recluses shunned the tumultuous ways of men, and traced the mysterious paths of Providence. Here they explored the secrets of nature, and invoked their fabled gods."

Sometimes wrapt in a sudden reverie of thought, sometimes engaged in conversation on the solemn appearance of things, the voyagers scarce perceive their progress. Before they are aware, this venerable scene is lost; and they find themselves advanced upon the borders of a beautiful lawn. The forest, retiring to the right hand, in the shape of a crescent, composed what Milton syles, "a verdurous wall of stateliest aspect;" and left, in the midst, an ample space for the flourishing of herbage.

Here, said Theron, if you please, we will alight, and leave the bearer of our floating sedan, to pursue his ceaseless course, to enrich the bosom of other valleys, and lave the feet of other hills,—to visit cities, and make the tour of counties,—to reflect the image of many a splendid structure which adorn his banks; and what is far more amiable, to distribute, all along his winding journey, innumerable conveniences both for man and beast; acquiring, the farther he goes, and the more benefit he confers, a deeper flow, and a wider swell; to the remarkable confirmation of that beneficent maxim, "There is that scattereth, and yet increaseth."*

Theron and Aspasio, walking across the spacious amphitheatre, seated themselves at the extremity of the bend. Before them lay a verdant area, quite even, perfectly handsome; but far from gay. Green was all the dress, without any mixture of gaudy flowers, or glittering colours. Only now and then a gentle breeze, skimming over the undulating mead, impressed a varying wavy gloss on its surface. The whole seemed to resemble the decent and sober ornaments of maturer age, when it has put off the trappings, and bid adieu to the levities of youth.—The

* Prov. xi. 24.

as transcending every earthly advantage.

broad transparent stream, ran parallel with the lips of the channel;* and drew a line of circumvallation, as it were, to guard the calm retreat. It appeared, where shaded with boughs, like a barrier of polished steel; where open to the sun, like a mirror of flowing crystal.—The eastern edges of the river were barricaded with a kind of mountainous declivity; on whose rude and rocky sides, the timorous rabbit burrowed, and the bearded goat browsed.—Not far from the summit two or three fountains gushed; which uniting their currents as they trickled down the steep, formed a natural cascade: here it was lost in the rushy dells, or obscured by the twisting roots; there it burst again into view, and playing full in the eye of day, looked like a sheet of spouting silver.

In this romantic retirement, said Theron, we are quite sequestered from society. We seem to be in a world of our own; and should almost be tempted to forget that we are encompassed with a kindred species, did not the music of those silver-tongued bells; poured from a distant steeple, and gliding along the gentle stream, bring us news of human kind.

Escaped from man, and his busy walks, methinks we are come to the house of tranquillity. Such a deep, undisturbed composure reigns all around! It is as if some august personage was making his entrance, or some majestic being was upon the point to speak, and all nature stood fixed in attentive expectation. No place better fitted to cherish or to inspire a contemplative sedateness.

Observe the simplicity and grandeur of those surrounding trees; the noble plainness of their verdure, and the prodigious stateliness of their aspect. What a speck are our gardens, and what a mere dwarf are our groves, compared with these vast plantations!—Here is none of your nice exactness, but all is irregu-

* The Greek, which is above all languages happy in its beautiful variety of compound words, very neatly expresses this appearance by

—ισοχειλης τη γη.

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larly and wildly great. Here are no traces of the shears, nor any footsteps of the spade, but the handy work of the Deity is apparent in all.—Give me the scenes which disdain the puny assistance of art, and are infinitely superior to the low toils of man. Give me the scenes which scorn to bribe our attention with a little borrowed spruceness of shape; but by their own native dignity command our regard. I love the prospects, which, the moment they are beheld, strike the soul with veneration, or transport it with wonder; and cry aloud in the ear of reason, “Ascribe ye greatness to our God.”—Such, I think, in a very eminent degree, is the forest;

—————High waving o’er the hills,
Or to the vast horizon wide diffus’d,
A boundless deep immensity of shade.

Asp. Solomon’s refined genius seems to have been fond of the same situation, and delighted with the same objects. Therefore, at a great expence, and in the most curious taste, he built the house of the forest.—Isaiah’s divine imagination was charmed with the same grand spectacle. More frequently than any of the prophets, he derives his illustrations from it. One comparison I particularly remember. Speaking of the Assyrian king and his military forces, he likens them to such an assemblage of trees; numerous, as their amazing multitudes; strong, as their massy trunks. Yet, numerous and potent as they were, they should all be brought low, and laid in the dust. “For behold the Lord, the Lord of hosts, shall lop the bough with terror, and the high ones of stature shall be hewn down, and the haughty shall be humbled; and he shall cut down the thickets of his forest with iron, and Lebanon shall fall by the mighty one.”*

Then he passes, by a most beautiful transition, to his darling topic, the redemption of sinners. He gives us, together with one of the finest contrasts

* Isa. x. 33, 34.

as transcending every earthly advantage.

imaginable, a view of the Messiah and his great salvation.* When those lofty cedars are levelled with the ground, "there shall come a rod," a twig shall spring "from the stem of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots:"† which, notwithstanding its mean original, and unpromising appearance, shall rear its head to the skies, and extend its shade to the ends of the earth.

Ther. You do well, Aspasio, to recall my roving thoughts. This magnificent solitude had captivated my imagination, and I was giving a loose to the usual sallies of my fancy. But with a willing compliance, I turn to a more excellent subject.—Only I must assure you that your remark awakens a painful idea in my mind, though a joyful one in your own. For my hopes, which were once high and lifted up, are now too much like that devoted prostrate forest.

Asp. My dear Theron, give me leave to say, they were never rightly founded. They were what Shakespear calls, "the baseless fabric of a vision." Now the shadowy and transient hopes are demolished, that solid and everlasting joys may succeed. Let them rest on Christ, the infinitely glorious Redeemer, and they shall never be overthrown, never be removed any more.

Cast a look upon yonder ivy. What can be more feeble? It has not strength enough to withstand the slightest blast. Nay, if left to itself, its own weight would crush it to the earth. Yet, by twining around the oak, how high it rises, and how firm it stands! An emblem of our state, and a pattern for our imitation.—Thus let us, who in ourselves are nothing, of ourselves can do nothing, let us fly to Christ; rely on Christ; and, as Barnabas (that true son of consola-

* This fine contrast, and that artful transition, are, by the injudicious division of the two chapters, very much obscured, if not quite lost, to many readers. The chapters, I think, should by no means be separated; but the tenth and eleventh, as a continuation of the same prophecy, should be united.

† Isa. xi. 1.

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tion) speaks, "cleave to the Lord Jesus Christ with full purpose of heart."* Let us determine to know nothing, to desire nothing, to depend on nothing, but Jesus Christ and him crucified. Let this be the motto of our faith, this the language of our souls, "Christ is all." Then shall our virtues, though hitherto smitten with a blast, revive as the corn; then shall our hopes, though in themselves weaker than the ivy, mount like the cedars.

Ther. You can hardly imagine, how a sense of guilt and unworthiness oppresses my mind. I am often discouraged, and cannot bring myself to be stedfast in faith, or joyful through hope.

Asp. You cannot bring yourself, but God Almighty's power and grace can bring to pass these desirable effects. And hear what the prophet says farther upon the charming topic which introduced our discourse. Whenever the eloquent Isaiah undertakes to display a truth, he gives it all the energy, all the beauty, and every heightening touch which it is capable of receiving.—This humble shoot, springing from the stem of Jesse, shall rise to such a pitch of elevation, that it shall be conspicuous far and near, and "stand for an ensign of the people." It shall be seen, not like a beacon upon the top of a hill, by the Israelites only, or the natives of a single territory; but, like the great luminaries of heaven, shall be visible in every country, and by the whole inhabited world.—"To it shall the Gentiles seek;" not only from the remotest, but from the most barbarous and idolatrous climes. These, even these persons, though savage in their nature, and detestable in their manners, shall be freely admitted, and find rest under his shadow. Nay, the refreshment which he yields, and the comfort which they receive, shall not be seasonable only, but of sovereign efficacy; "his rest shall be glorious."†

From this we learn, that all the blessings of Christ's mediation are designed for Gentiles; for the most

* Acts xi. 23.

† Isa. xi. 10.

as transcending every earthly advantage.

abandoned and abominable sinners.—That they are so full and consummate, as to create a calm of tranquillity; a glorious rest, in the most troubled, afflicted, guilty consciences.—And I dare challenge even my Theron's misgiving mind, to specify any want which is not supplied, any grievance which is not redressed by the righteousness of Jesus Christ.—I formerly encountered your objections, let me now combat your scruples.

Ther. Sometimes I have a deep and distressing conviction of my extreme sinfulness.—'Tis like a sore burden, too heavy for me to bear.—'Tis like the vilest filth, and renders me odious to myself; how much more loathsome to the all-seeing eye!—It appears like a debt of ten thousand talents, and I have nothing, no, not any thing to pay.—Then I experience what the psalmist so pathetically laments; “My sins have taken such hold upon me, that I am not able to look up: yea they are more in number than the hairs of my head, and my heart is ready to fail; my hopes are upon the point to expire.”

Asp. Then, Theron, fly to that just and righteous one, who is the strength of our hearts; the life of our hopes; and our portion for ever.

If sin is a sore burden, look unto Christ, who bore it all, in his own body, on the tree; and removed, entirely removed that tremendous load, which would otherwise have sunk the whole world into the nethermost hell.—If sin rendered us filthy, let us have recourse to that blood of sprinkling, which cleanses, not from a few stains only, but from all guilt. By which the most defiled transgressors become fair as the fairest wool, nay, whiter than the virgin snows.*—If sin is a debt, † subjecting us to wrath, and bind-

* Psa. li. 7.

† By these three images the psalmist displays the horrible and destructive malignity of sin, together with the free nature and invaluable worth of evangelical forgiveness. “Blessed is he whose transgression,” as an unsupportable load, (נשוי) “is bore,” or taken away; whose sin,” as being the most abominable filth, (כסוי) “is covered;

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ing us over to punishment; let us confide in that gracious surety, who has taken the debt upon himself, and made it all his own; and not only so, but has paid it; paid it to the uttermost farthing, to the very last mite; so that justice itself can demand no more.

Let me confirm and illustrate this comfortable truth by a scriptural similitude. No similitudes are more exact, and none so striking. "I have blotted out as a thick cloud your transgressions, and as a cloud your sins."* A little while ago, the whole expanse of yonder sky was covered with clouds. Nothing could more strongly represent a multitude of corruptions besieging the heart, and a multitude of iniquities overspreading the life.—But where is now that immense arrangement of gloomy vapours? The sun has shone them, and the wind has swept them, clean away. There are none, neither great nor small, remaining. From one end of the wide-extended hemisphere to the other, we see nothing but the clear and beautiful blue of the firmament. So, saith the Spirit of God to the true believer, so totally is your guilt, however horrid and enormous, done away through the dying Jesus.

Ther. It is not possible to conceive, nor will the whole creation afford a more exquisitely-fine comparison. Perhaps nothing can so emphatically describe the most prodigious multitude, entirely obliterated, without the least trace of their former existence. But I am not only chargeable with past iniquities; I am also liable to daily miscarriages. I relapse into sin; and when I would do good, evil is present with me. Nay, my best hours are not free from sinful infirmi-

unto whom the Lord imputeth not" (לאִיִּדוֹשׁוּב) that most ruinous of all debts, iniquity.—It is pleasing to observe the vehemence and ardour with which the royal penitent speaks on this favourite topic. He breaks out with a kind of holy abruptness, and pours his soul in a variety of warm expressions; as one who thought he could not possibly enter upon the subject too soon, or dwell upon it too long. Psa. xxxii. 1, 2.

* Isa. xlv. 22.

as transcending every earthly advantage.

ties, nor my best duties from sinful imperfections; which, like a worm at the core of the fruit, eat away the vigour of my graces, and tarnish the beauty of my services.

Asp. Because, through the frailty of your mortal nature, you cannot always stand upright; because even the "just man falleth" daily, and daily contracteth defilements; therefore "a fountain is opened for sin and for uncleanness."* The blood and atonement of Christ are compared to a heavenly fountain, in which polluted sinners may wash daily, wash hourly; and be constantly, perfectly clean.—A cistern may fail, may be broken or exhausted, but it is the property of a real fountain, never to be dried up, always to yield its waters. Such is the efficacy of Christ's death; not to be diminished by universal and by incessant use. It "removes the iniquity of the land."† It "takes away the sin of the world."‡ It is new, for our application, every morning; new, for this blessed purpose every moment. On which account, it makes complete provision for our cleansing, our restoration, and our comfort.—Especially, as it is not only sovereign in itself, and always free for our approach, but is ever pleaded by a great High Priest in our behalf. Therefore the inspired casuist directs us to this source of consolation, under all the upbraidings of conscience, and the remains of inbred depravity; "If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, and he is the propitiation for our sins."§

We: St. John reckons himself in the number of those frail offending creatures, who stand in need of Christ, as a perpetual intercessor. This is written, not to encourage us in the commission of sin; but that we may be the less discouraged under a sense of our infirmities.—We have, not we possibly may, but we actually have. A soul, burdened with guilt, cannot

* Zech. xiii. 1.

† Zech. iii. 9.

‡ John i. 29.

§ 1 John ii. 1.

A celebration of the gospel and its blessings,

be satisfied, cannot be eased, with a bare *perhaps*. It is therefore positively affirmed, as a matter of established certainty, of which we should not admit a doubt.—We have for our advocate, not a mean person, but him who received an illustrious testimony from the most excellent glory, “This is my beloved Son.”*—Not a guilty person, who stands in need of pardon for himself, but “Jesus Christ the righteous.” Not a mere petitioner, who relies purely upon liberality; but one who has merited, fully merited whatever he asks: “he is the propitiation for our sins,” has paid our ransom, and purchased our peace.—In consequence of which, he claims rather than asks our renewed, our irrevocable forgiveness.—This he claims, not from an unrelenting Judge, but from his Father and our Father.—And can such a plea meet with a repulse? Can such an advocate miscarry in his suit?—If the prophets of old were reckoned “the chariots of Israel, and the horsemen thereof;”† because, like their ancestor Jacob, they had power with God, and prevailed in prayer; Oh! what a defence, what a security, is the divinely excellent, and ever-prevailing intercession of Jesus Christ!

“Your graces,” you complain, “are sullied, and your services defective.”—Then, my dear friend, renounce them in point of confidence; and gladly receive, cordially embrace, the all-perfect righteousness of our Lord. So shall your justification be complete; and your services, though deficient in themselves, be

* 2 Pet. i. 1.

† 2 Kings ii. 12. xiii. 14. There is a peculiar beauty, and most apposite significancy, in this proverbial saying, as used by the ancient Israelites. Horses and chariots were deemed, in those ages, the principal strength of the battle, the most formidable apparatus of war. Of these the Israelites were entirely destitute. Their God had expressly forbidden them to multiply horses; and we never read of their bringing any considerable number of cavalry into the field.—But, so long as they enjoyed the presence of their prophets, they wanted not this arm of flesh. They had more than an equivalent for chariots and horses, in the fervent and effectual prayers of those holy men of God.

as transcending every earthly advantage.

“accepted in the Beloved.”—I have seen, painted upon a flat surface, and awkward and disagreeable countenance; in which was nothing regular, nothing graceful, but every feature disproportionate. Yet this very face, reflected from a cylindrical mirror, has put off its deformity; the lineaments became well adjusted; symmetry connected every part, and beauty smiled throughout the whole. Like the former our virtues appear, when compared with the immaculate purity of God, or the sublime perfections of his law: But they acquire the amiableness of the latter, when presented to the Father by our divine Mediator, and recommended by his inconceivably precious oblation.*

Milton, taking his hint from the revelations of St. John, represents our great High Priest in this glorious and delightful attitude; represents him offering up the supplications and penitential duties of our first parents; mixing with them the incense of his own merits; and thus interceding before the throne.

See, Father! what first fruits of earth are sprung
From thy implanted grace in man! These sighs
And pray'rs, which, in this golden censer mix'd
With incense, I thy Priest before thee bring.

—————Now therefore bend thine ear
To supplication; hear his sighs, though mute!
Unskilful with what words to pray, let Me
Interpret for him; Me his advocate,
And propitiation. All his works on Me,
Good, or not good, ingraft: My merit those
Shall perfect; and for these My death shall pay.†

The poet's words are very emphatical. Yet words

* They, the persons and performances of frail men, shall come up with acceptance on mine altar, saith the Lord, Isa. lx. 7.—Which is explained by St. Peter's comment; Ye are an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable unto God by Jesus Christ, 1 Pet. ii. 5. and still farther ascertained by St. Paul's practice; who, when he addresses the majesty of heaven with any petition, or presents the tribute of praise, presumes not to do either the one or the other, but in the blessed Mediator's name: because, secluded from this grand recommendation, they would be offensive to the awful Jehovah, “as smoke in his nostrils;” accompanied with it, they are acceptable “as the sweet smelling incense.”

† Par. Lost, Book XI. l. 22, &c.

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can no more express the prevalence of our Lord's negotiation, than the picture of the sun can diffuse its splendour, or convey its warmth.

Ther. My spiritual wants are many. I have many duties to discharge, and many temptations to withstand; many corruptions to mortify, and many graces to cultivate, or rather to acquire. Yet have I no stock, and no strength of my own.

Asp. I rejoice, that my Theron is sensible of his own indigence. The good Lord keep us both, in this respect, as little children: whose whole dependence is upon the nurse's care, or their parents' bounty! Then may we, having such a sense of our poverty, and having a great High Priest over the house of God, come boldly to the throne of grace. We may apply, through the righteousness of Jesus Christ, for all needful succour, and for every desirable blessing.—If Solomon could say, "Lord, remember David, and all his trouble." If Moses could say, "Lord, remember Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, thy servants." How much more confidently may we say, "Lord, remember Jesus and all his sufferings; Jesus, and all his merits. Shall they be sent empty away, who have their Saviour's obedience to plead?"—No verily. Though they are altogether unworthy in themselves, yet worthy is the Lamb that was slain, for whose sake their petitions shall be granted, and their every necessity supplied.

Let me repeat to you a most beautiful encouraging portion of scripture; which you may look upon, under all your wants, as a charte blanche put into your hand by God all-sufficient: "Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which he has consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh; and having an High Priest over the house of God; let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith."*

The apostle, in this place, and throughout this

* Heb. x. 13, 20, 21, 22.

for every case of distress, and every time of need.

whole epistle, alludes to the Mosaic ordinances, in order to shew, that the privileges of the christian dispensation were typified by, yet are greatly superior to, those of the Jewish.—Among the Jews, none but the high priest was permitted to set a foot within the holy of holies; and he, only on the solemn day of expiation. Whereas, all christians are allowed to enter into the immediate presence of the most high God: may have the nearest access to Him, who dwells in the heaven of heavens; and this, not once in the year only, but at all times, and on all occasions.—The high priest never made that awful approach, but with the blood of a slaughtered animal. We have blood of infinitely richer value, to atone for our failings, and recommend our addresses; even the blood of the crucified Jesus.—Aaron entered through the veil of the temple; a way, which was soon to be antiquated, and for ever to be abolished. We enter by a far more noble way; by the flesh of our blessed Redeemer; given as a propitiatory sacrifice for our sins. Which way is both new and living; such as never waxes old, will subsist to the end of time, and leads to eternal life. Trusting in this sacrifice, and entering by this way, which are consecrated for our use, we may not only draw near, but draw near with boldness, with an humble filial confidence: and present our supplications with faith,—with assurance of faith,—with full assurance of faith.

How strong is the contrast, and how fine the gradation! how precious the doctrine, and how free the privilege! What shall we fear, if we believe this doctrine? what can we lack, if we improve this privilege?—And why should we not believe the former, why should we not improve the latter? Since they both are founded, not in any excellent endowments, not in any recommending actions of our own, but purely, solely, entirely, on the blood of Jesus Christ.

Ther. There may come seasons of desertion, when all graces are languid, if not dead! when the light of God's countenance is suspended, if not turned into darkness; and the man is more like a lifeless log than

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a zealous christian. These frames of mind I have heard mentioned, and I begin to know something of them by experience.

Asp. Then, Theron, when you walk in darkness, "and see no light" of sensible comfort, "trust in the name," the unchangeable grace, "of the Lord; and stay upon" the righteousness, of "your God."* This is not barely my advice, but the direction of an infallible guide.—This agrees also with the character of a real christian, as it is most exactly drawn by an unerring pen; "We rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh;"† no reliance on any thing of our own, either for present joy, or future glory.

To rely on the elevation of our spirits, or the enlargement of our devotion, is like building our house upon the ice; which may abide for a season, but, upon the first alteration of weather, ceases to be a foundation, and becomes "water that runneth apace." Whereas, to derive our consolation from the Mediator's righteousness, and Jehovah's faithfulness, is to build our edifice upon the rock; which "may not be removed, but standeth fast for ever." The former of these, even amidst all our changes, is invariably the same. The latter, notwithstanding all our unworthiness, is inviolably sure. Therefore the fruit of that righteousness is peace, and the effect of this faithfulness is, if not rapturous joy, yet "quietness and assurance for ever."‡

* Isa. l. 10.

† Phil. iii. 3. Exactly drawn.—Perhaps there is no where extant, a finer, a more complete, or so lively a picture of the true christian. 'Tis in miniature, I own; but it comprehends all the master-lines, and every distinguishing feature. We are they, who worship God in the spirit: with the spiritual homage of a renewed heart; with faith, love, resignation. And rejoice in Christ Jesus: in him look for all our acceptance with God; from him derive all the peace of our minds; and on him place all the hope of our final felicity. And have no confidence in the flesh: renouncing ourselves, in every view, as unprofitable servants; disclaiming all our own works and attainments, as defective services.

‡ Isa. xxxii. 17.

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So that, when it is winter in my soul, and there seems to be dearth on all my sensible delights, I would still say with the Psalmist, "Why art thou disquieted, O my soul? Christ is the same amidst all thy derelictions. He is a green fir-tree,* which never loses his verdure. Under his shadow thou mayest always find repose. His merit and atonement are still mighty to save; they constitute an everlasting and infinite righteousness. The promises of God, through his mediation, are yea and amen; † are unquestionably and unalienably thine.

Ther. 'Tis very probable, I may meet with afflictions; death in my family, or disease in my person. Disappointments may frustrate my desigus. Providence may wear a frowning aspect, as though the Lord had a controversy with his sinful creature, and was making him to possess the iniquities of his youth. And what will be sufficient to support and to cheer, in such a gloomy hour? ‡

Asp. The righteousness of Christ.—Nothing is so sovereign, to calm our fears, and remove all apprehensions of the divine wrath. Apprehensions of the divine wrath would draw the curtains of horror around our sick-beds, and throw upon our languishing eye-lids the shadow of death. § But a believing improvement of Christ's satisfaction for our offences, clears up the mournful scene, and takes away the sting of tribulation.

Attending to this great propitiation, the sufferer sees his sins forgiven, and his God reconciled. From

* Hos. xiv. 8.

† 2 Cor. i. 20.

‡ The sufficiency of Christ's righteousness, to answer all these important and delightful ends, is excellently displayed in Mr. Rawlin's sermons, on Christ the Righteousness of his People. In which the public have seen the grand and amiable essentials of the gospel, delivered in masculine language; defended by nervous reasoning; and animated with a lively devotion.

§ Alluding to that description of tribulation and anguish, which, I believe, no person of sensibility can read without shuddering; My face is foul with weeping, and on my eyelids is the shadow of death. Job iv, 16.

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whence he concludes, that the severest afflictions are only fatherly corrections; shall not exceed his ability to bear; and shall assuredly obtain a gracious issue. He can fetch comfort from that cheering word, "I will be with him in trouble;" and expect the accomplishment of that most consolatory promise, I "will deliver him, and bring him to honour."*—These supports have enabled the saints, to kiss the rod, and bless the hand, which chastiseth them; to possess their souls, not in patience only, but in thankfulness also. While they have looked inward, and discerned their absolute need of these bitter but salutary medicines; have looked upward, and beheld the cup in a most wise and tender Physician's hand; have looked forward, with a joyful hope, to that better world, where God will wipe away all tears from their eyes, and there shall be no more sorrow, nor any more pain.

Ther. The last occasion of need is the trying hour of death, and the tremendous day of judgment. Will this righteousness carry us with safety through the darksome valley, and present us, with acceptance, at the dreadful tribunal?

Asp. It will; it will.—This silences all the curses of the law, and disarms death of every terror. To believe in this righteousness, is to meet death at our Saviour's side; or rather, like good old Simeon, with the Saviour in our arms.—They overcame, says the beloved disciple, they overcame the last enemy, not by natural fortitude, or philosophic resolution, but "by the blood of the Lamb;"† by a believing application of the victorious Redeemer's merit. "I know," adds the heroic apostle, "whom I have believed;"‡ I am assured, that my Jesus is infinitely faithful, and will not desert me; that his ransom is absolutely sufficient, and cannot deceive me. Therefore with a holy bravery he bids defiance to death; or rather, triumphs over it as a vanquished enemy; "Thanks be to God who giveth us the victory through our

* Psa. xci. 15.

† Rev. xii. 2.

‡ 2 Tim. i. 12.

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Lord Jesus Christ!"*—Nay, through the wonderful efficacy of Christ's propitiation, "death is ours;"† not our foe, but our friend and deliverer. We may number it among our treasures; and rest satisfied, that "to die is gain."

What though our flesh see corruption; though this body, vile at present, be made viler still, by dwelling amidst worms, and mouldering in the dust; yet through His righteousness, who is the resurrection and the life, it shall shake off the dishonours of the grave; it shall rise to a new and illustrious state of existence; it shall be made like the glorious and immortal body of our triumphant Lord.—If the body be so refined, so exalted; what will be the dignity, what the perfection, of the soul? or rather, of the soul and body both, when they are happily and indissolubly united, at the resurrection of the just?—Shall they have any thing to fear when the judgment is set, and the books are opened? 'Tis probable there will be no accusation, 'tis certain "there is no condemnation, to them that are in Christ Jesus."‡ Who shall lay any thing to their charge? "It is God,"—not man, or angel, or any creature, but God—"that justifies," them. The God whose law was broke, the God to whom vengeance belongeth, he himself pronounces them innocent, because their iniquities have been laid upon Christ; he himself pronounces them righteous, because they are interested in the obedience of their Redeemer; on these accounts, he himself pronounces them blessed, and gives them an abundant entrance into the joy of their Lord.

But what can express, or who can imagine their happiness, when they take up their abode, in the palaces of heaven, amidst the choirs of angels, and under the light of God's countenance! when they possess "the hope of righteousness;"§ when they wear "the crown of righteousness;"|| and receive that great, that eter-

* 1 Cor. xv. 57.

† 1 Cor. iii. 22.

‡ Rom. viii. 1.

§ Gal. v. 5.

|| 2 Tim. iv. 8.

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nal salvation, which is an adequate recompence for the humiliation and agonies of "Jesus Christ the righteous."*

Come then, my dear Theron, let us henceforth be as branches, ingrafted into the heavenly Vine; derive all our sap, all our moisture, all our consolation, from his fulness. Let us live upon our all-sufficient Redeemer, as the Israelites subsisted on their manna from heaven, and their water from the rock, and not wish for other, as we cannot possibly enjoy better sustenance.

Ther. Is this the meaning of our Lord's exhortation, when he shews the necessity of "eating his flesh" and "drinking his blood?"

Asp. 'Tis the very same. A repeated and incessant application of our Saviour's merits, for all the purposes of piety and salvation, is the kernel of this nut, the meaning of this metaphor.—When we habitually advert to Jesus Christ, as dying for our sins, and rising again for our justification; performing all righteousness, that we may be entitled to an eternal crown; and interceding in heaven, that we may be filled with all the fulness of God: then we eat his flesh, and drink his blood: then we derive a life of solid comfort, and real godliness, from his mediatorial offices; just as we derive the continuance of our natural life, from the daily use of alimentary recruits.

Ther. Your discourse brings to my remembrance that magnificent and beautiful passage in scripture, where Christ is called The Sun of Righteousness.—Your doctrine sets the comparison in a very advantageous light; gives it the utmost force, and the greatest propriety.—The righteousness of Christ, according to your account, is as extensively useful in the christian life, as the beams of the grand luminary are in material nature.—The sun fills the air; where it diffuses light, and creates day.—The sun penetrates the ocean; from whence it exhales vapours, and forms

* John ii. 1.

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the clouds.—In the vegetable creation, the sun raises the sap and protrudes the gems; unfolds the leaves, and paints the blossoms; distends the fruit, and concocts the juices.—Turn we to the animal world; the sun delights the eye, and gladdens the heart. It awakens millions of insects into being; and imparts that general joy, which every sensible creature feels. Indeed “there is nothing hid from the heat thereof.”

Asp. Thus the Lord Jesus Christ, that true and only “Sun of righteousness, arises” on his people “with healing in his wings.”* So various, so efficacious, and so extensive are his influences. Like a Sun, he enlightens and enlivens; like wings, he cherishes and protects; like a remedy, he heals and restores: and all, by virtue of his righteousness, on account of his righteousness. Nor can we doubt, nor need we wonder, if we consider its nature and its author. Its nature; it is consummately excellent, has every kind, and every degree of perfection. Its author; it is the righteousness and obedience of that incomparable Person, in whom “dwells all the fullness of the Godhead.”

It must therefore,—you will permit me to sum up in a word, what has been displayed at large,—it must be fully answerable to the demands of the law, even in its highest purity, and utmost exactness.—It is infinitely superior to the demerit of sin, and entirely absolves from all guilt, entirely exempts from all condemnation. It is a most valid and never-failing plea, against the accusation of Satan, and the challenges of conscience.—It establishes an undoubted title to every blessing, whether in time or in eternity, whether of grace or of glory.—It is a sure support for the christian, in an hour of desertion, and the agonies of death. Casting anchor on this bottom, he may dismiss every fear, and ride out every storm. Leaning upon this staff, he may go down to the repose of the grave; and neither be appalled at the solemn harbingers of disso-

* Mal. iv. 2.

Blessed be God for the Lord our Righteousness!

lution, nor terrified at its far more awful consequences. —The merit of this righteousness, and the power of its Divine Author, will unseal the tomb; will bring forth the sleeping dust from the chambers of putrefaction; and build up the whole man to immortality and glory. By this he will be presented “without spot;” * presented “faultless;” † yea, be presented “perfect,” ‡ and with “exceeding joy,” before the throne.

What a gift then is the “righteousness of Christ!” Blessed be God, for all the indulgent dispensations of Providence! Blessed be God, for all the beneficial productions of nature! But above all blessed be God, for the transcendent and unspeakable gift of Christ,—for the unsearchable and infinite treasures of his righteousness.

* Eph. v. 27.

† Jude 24.

‡ Col. i. 20.



LETTER

TO

THE REV. MR. HERVEY.

Oct. 15, 1756.

DEAR SIR,

A CONSIDERABLE time since, I sent you a few hasty thoughts which occurred to me on reading the Dialogues between Theron and Aspasio. I have not been favoured with any answer. Yet upon another and a more careful perusal of them, I could not but set down some obvious reflections, which I would rather have communicated before those Dialogues were published.

In the First Dialogue there are several just and strong observations, which may be of use to every serious reader. In the Second, is not the description often too laboured, the language too stiff and affected? Yet the Reflections on the Creation, in the 31st (41st) and following pages, make abundant amends for this. [I cite the pages according to the Dublin edition, having written the rough draught of what follows, in Ireland.]*

P. 39. (53.) Is *justification* more or less, than God's pardoning and accepting a sinner through the merits of *Christ*? That God herein "reckons the righteousness and obedience which *Christ* performed *as our own*:" I allow, if by that ambiguous expression, you mean only as you here explain it yourself, "They are as effectual for obtaining our salvation, *as if they were our own* personal qualifications," p. 41. (55.)

P. 43. (57.) "We are not solicitous as to any *particular* set of *phrases*. Only let men be humbled, as repenting criminals at *Christ's* feet, let them rely as devoted pensioners on his merits, and they are undoubtedly in the way to a blissful immortality."

* The figures which the reader finds within a parenthesis, thus, (41st) refer to the pages of the *present* Edition.

Remarks by Mr. Wesley.

Then for *Christ's* sake, and the sake of the immortal souls which He has purchased with his blood, do not dispute for that *particular phrase*, *The imputed righteousness of Christ*. It is not scriptural; it is not necessary; men who scruple to use, men who never heard the expression, may yet "be humbled, as *repenting criminals*, at his feet, and rely as *devoted pensioners* on his merits." But it has done immense hurt. I have had abundant proof, that the frequent use of this unnecessary phrase, instead of "furthering men's progress in vital holiness, has made them satisfied without any holiness at all; yea, and encouraged them to work all uncleanness with greediness.

P. 45. (59.) "To ascribe Pardon to Christ's *passive*, Eternal Life to his *active* righteousness, is fanciful rather than judicious. His universal obedience from his birth to his death, is the one foundation of my hope."

This is unquestionably right. But if it be, there is no manner of need, to make the imputation of his *active* righteousness, a separate and laboured head of discourse. O that you had been content with this plain, scriptural account, and spared some of the Dialogues and Letters that follow!

The Third and Fourth Dialogues contain an admirable illustration and confirmation of the great doctrine of Christ's Satisfaction. Yet even here I observe a few passages, which are liable to some exception.

P. 54. (68.) "Satisfaction was made to the Divine Law." I do not remember any such expression in Scripture. This way of speaking of the Law as a *person injured* and to be *satisfied*, seems hardly defensible.

P. 74. (90. Note.) "The *death of Christ* procured the *pardon* and *acceptance* of believers, even before he came in the flesh." Yea, and ever since. In this we all agree. And why should we contend for any thing more?

P. 120. (141.) "All the benefits of the new covenant, are the *purchase of his blood*." Surely they are. And after this has been fully proved, where is the need, where is the use, of contending so strenuously, for the *imputation of his righteousness*, as is done in the Fifth and Sixth Dialogues?

P. 135. (156.) "If He was our Substitute as to *penal sufferings*, why not, as to *justifying obedience*?"

The former is expressly asserted in Scripture. The latter is not expressly asserted there.

P. 145. (167.) "As sin and misery have *abounded* through the first Adam, mercy and grace have *much more abounded* through the Second. So that none can have any reason to complain." No, not if the Second Adam died for all. Otherwise all for whom he did not die, have great reason to complain. For they

Remarks by Mr. Wesley.

inevitably *fall* by the first Adam, without any *help* from the Second.

P. 148. (171.) "The whole world of believers" is an expression which never occurs in Scripture; nor has it any countenance there: the world in the inspired writings being constantly taken either in a universal or in a bad sense; either for the whole of mankind, or for that part of them who know not God.

P. 149. (172.) "In the LORD shall all the house of Israel be justified." It ought unquestionably to be rendered, "By or through the LORD." This argument therefore proves nothing. "Ye are complete in him." The words literally rendered are, *Ye are filled with him.* And the whole passage, as any unprejudiced reader may observe, relates to sanctification, not justification.

P. 150. (173.) "They are accepted for Christ's sake: this is justification through imputed righteousness." That remains to be proved. Many allow the former, who cannot allow the latter.

Theron. "I see no occasion for such *nice distinctions and metaphysical subtleties.*

Aspasio. You oblige us to make use of them by counfounding these very different ideas, that is, Christ's active and passive righteousness."

I answer, We do not *confound* these: but neither do we *separate* them. Nor have we any authority from Scripture, for either thinking or speaking of one separate from the other. And this whole debate on one of them separate from the other, is a mere *metaphysical subtlety.*

P. 151. (174.) "The righteousness which justifies us, is already wrought out."—A crude, unscriptural expression! "It was *set on foot, carried on, completed.*" O vain philosophy! The plain truth is, *Christ lived and tasted death for every man.* And through the merits of his life and death, every believer is justified.

P. 152. (175.) "Whoever perverts so glorious a doctrine, shews he never believed." Not so. They who *turn back as a dog to the vomit, had once escaped the pollutions of the world by the knowledge of Christ.*

P. 153. (176.) "The goodness of God leadeth to repentance." This is unquestionably true. But the *nice, metaphysical doctrine of imputed righteousness,* leads not to repentance, but to licentiousness.

P. 154. (177.) "The believer cannot but add to his faith, works of righteousness." During his first love, this is often true. But it is not true afterwards, as we know and feel by melancholy experience.

P. 155. (178.) "We no longer obey, in order to lay the foundation for our final acceptance." No: that foundation is already

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laid in the merits of Christ. Yet we obey, *in order* to our final acceptance through his merits, And in this sense, by obeying we *lay a good foundation, that we may attain eternal life.*

P. 156. (179.) “We *establish the law*: we provide for its honour, by the perfect obedience of Christ.” Can you possibly think, St. Paul meant this? That such a thought ever entered into his mind? The plain meaning is, We establish both the true sense, and the effectual practice of it: we provide for its being both understood and practised in its full extent.

P. 157. (179 and 180.) “On those who reject the atonement, just severity.” Was it ever possible for them, not to reject it? If not, how is it just, to cast them into a lake of fire, for not doing what it was impossible they should do? Would it be just (make it your own case) to cast *you* into hell, for not touching heaven with your hand?

P. 159. (182.) “Justification is *complete* the first moment we believe, and is incapable of *augmentation*.”

Not so: there may be as many *degrees* in the *favour* as in the *image* of God.

P. 190 (216.) “St. Paul often mentions a *righteousness imputed*: (not a righteousness; never once; but simply *righteousness*.) “What can this be, but *the righteousness of Christ*?” He tells you himself, Rom. vi. 6. *To him that believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, Faith is imputed for righteousness.* “Why is Christ stiled *Jehovah our Righteousness*?” Because we are both justified and sanctified through him.

P. 191. (217.) “My death, the cause of their forgiveness; my righteousness, the ground of their acceptance.”

How does this agree with p. 45, (59.) “To ascribe pardon to Christ’s *passive*, eternal life to his *active* righteousness, is fanciful rather than judicious?”

P. 195. (221.) “He commends such kinds of beneficence *only*, as were exercised to a disciple as such.” Is not this a slip of the pen? Will not our Lord then commend, and reward eternally, all kinds of beneficence, provided they flowed from a principle of loving faith? Yea, that which was exercised to a Samaritan, a Jew, a Turk, or a Heathen? Even these I would not term “transient bubbles,” though they do not *procure* our justification.

P. 197. (222.) “How must our righteousness exceed that of the Scribes and Pharisees? Not only in being sincere, but in possessing a *complete* righteousness, even that of Christ.” Did our Lord mean this? Nothing less. He specifies in the following parts of his sermon, the very instances wherein the righteousness of a Christian exceeds that of the Scribes and Pharisees.

P. 198. (224.) “He brings this specious *hypocrite* to the test.”

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How does it appear, that he was an *hypocrite*? Our Lord gives not the least intimation of it. Surely he *loved him*, not for his hypocrisy, but his sincerity!

Yet he loved the world, and therefore could not keep any of the commandments in their spiritual meaning. And the keeping of these is undoubtedly the *way* to, though not the *cause* of, eternal life.

P. 200 (226.) “*By works his faith was made perfect*: appeared to be true.” No: the natural sense of the words is, *By the grace superadded while he wrought those works, his faith was literally made perfect.*

Ibid. (Note.) “*He that doth righteousness is righteous*——manifests the truth of his conversion.” Nay; the plain meaning is, *He alone is truly righteous*, whose faith worketh by love.

P. 201. (227.) “*St. James speaks of the justification of our faith.*” Not unless you mean by that odd expression, our *faith being made perfect*: for so the apostle explains his own meaning. Perhaps the word *justified* is once used by St. Paul for *manifested*. But that does not prove it is to be so understood here.

P. 202. (228.) “*Whoso doeth these things shall never fall into total apostasy.*” How pleasing is this to flesh and blood! But David says no such thing. His meaning is, *Whoso doeth these things to the end, shall never fall into hell.*

The Seventh Dialogue is full of important truths. Yet some expressions in it I cannot commend.

P. 216. (244.) “*One thing thou lackest*, the imputed righteousness of Christ.” You cannot think, this is the meaning of the text. Certainly the *one thing* our Lord meant was, the love of God. This was the thing he lacked.

P. 222. (250.) “*Is the obedience of Christ insufficient to accomplish our justification?*” Rather I would ask, *Is the death of Christ insufficient to purchase it?*

P. 226. (255.) “*The saints in glory ascribe the whole of their salvation to the blood of the Lamb.*” So do I: and yet I believe he “obtained for all a *possibility* of salvation.”

P. 227. (255.) “*The terms of acceptance for fallen man were a full satisfaction to the Divine Justice, and a complete conformity to the Divine Law.*” This you take for granted, but I cannot allow.

The *terms* of acceptance for fallen man are *repentance* and *faith*. *Repent ye, and believe the gospel.*

Ibid. (255.) “*There are but two methods whereby any can be justified, either by a perfect obedience to the Law, or because Christ hath kept the law in our stead.*” You should say, “*Or by faith in Christ.*” I then answer, This is true. And fallen man is justified, not by *perfect obedience*, but by *faith*. What Christ

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has done is the *foundation* of our justification, not the *term* or *condition* of it.

In the Eighth Dialogue likewise there are many great truths, and yet some things liable to exception.

P. 253. (283.) "David, GOD himself dignifies with the *most exalted* of all characters." Far, very far from it. We have more exalted characters than David's, both in the Old Testament and in the New. Such are those of Samuel, Daniel, yea, and Job, in the former; of St. Paul and St. John in the latter.

"But God styles him *a man after his own heart*." This is the text which has caused many to mistake! for want of considering, first, That this is said of David in a *particular respect*, not with regard to his *whole character*: secondly, The time at which it was spoken. When was David *a man after God's own heart*? When God found him following the ewes great with young, when he took him from the sheep-folds, Psa. lxxiii. 71. In was in the second or third year of Saul's reign, that Samuel said to him, *The Lord hath sought him a man after his own heart, and hath commanded him to be captain over his people*, 1 Sam. xiii. 14. But was he *a man after God's own heart* all his life? Or in all particulars? So far from it, that we have few more exceptionable characters, among all the men of God, recorded in Scripture.

P. 261. (290.) "*There is not a just man upon earth that sinneth not*." Solomon might truly say so before Christ came. And St. John might after he came, say as truly, *Whosoever is born of God sinneth not*. "But in many things we offend all." That St. James does not speak this of himself, or of real Christians, will clearly appear, to all who impartially consider the context.

The Ninth Dialogue proves excellently well, that we cannot be *justified by our works*.

But have you thoroughly considered the words which occur in the 270th (300th) page?

"O children of Adam, you are *no longer* obliged to love God with all your strength, nor your neighbour as yourselves. *Once* indeed I insisted on absolute purity of heart: *now* I can dispense with some degrees of evil desire. Since Christ"—has fulfilled the Law for you, "You need not fulfil it. I will *connive* at, yea, accommodate my demands to your weakness."

I agree with you, That "this doctrine makes the Holy One of God a minister of sin." And is it not your own? Is not this the very doctrine which you espouse throughout your book?

I cannot but except to several passages also in the the Tenth Dialogue. I ask, First,

P. 291. (322.) "Does the *righteousness of God* ever mean" (as you affirm) "*the merits of Christ*?" I believe not once in all the Scripture. It often means, and particularly in the Epistle

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to the Romans, God's *method of justifying* sinners. When therefore you say,

P. 292. (323.) "The righteousness of God means, such a righteousness as may justly challenge his acceptance;" I cannot allow it at all: and this capital mistake must needs lead you into many others. But I follow you step by step.

Ibid. "In order to entitle us to a reward, there must be an imputation of righteousness." There must be an interest in Christ. And then *every man shall receive his own reward, according to his own labour.*

P. 293. (324.) "A rebel may be *forgiven*, without being restored to the dignity of a *son*." A rebel against an earthly king may; but not a rebel against God. In the very same moment that God forgives us, we are made the sons of God. Therefore this is an idle dispute. For *pardon* and *acceptance*, though they may be *distinguished*, cannot be *divided*. The words of Job, which you cite, are wide of the question. Those of Solomon prove no more than this, (and who denies it?) That justification implies both *pardon* and *acceptance*.

P. 295. (326.) "*Grace reigneth through righteousness unto eternal life*,"—that is, the free love of God brings us through justification and sanctification to glory. *Ibid.* (327.) "*That they may receive forgiveness, and a lot among the sanctified*:" that is, that they may receive pardon, holiness, heaven.

Ibid. (327.) "Is not the satisfaction made by the death of Christ, sufficient to obtain both our full pardon and final happiness?" Unquestionably it is, and neither of the texts you cite proves the contrary.

P. 296. (328.) "If it was requisite for Christ to be baptized, much more to fulfil the moral law."

I cannot prove that either the one or the other was requisite *in order* to his *purchasing* redemption for us.

P. 297. (328.) "By Christ's sufferings alone, the Law was not satisfied." Yes it was; for it required only the alternative, Obey or die. It requires no man to obey and die too. If any man had perfectly obeyed, he would not have died. *Ibid.* (329.) "Where Scripture ascribes *the whole* of our salvation to the death of Christ, a *part* of his humiliation is put for the *whole*." I cannot allow this without some proof. *He was obedient unto death*, is no proof at all; as it does not necessarily imply any more, than that *he died in obedience* to the Father. In some texts there is a *necessity*, of taking a part for the whole. But in these there is no such *necessity*.

P. 300. (332.) "Christ *undertook* to do every thing necessary for our redemption:" namely, in a *covenant* made with the Father. It is sure, he *did* every thing necessary: but how does it appear,

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that he *undertook* this before the foundation of the world, and that by a positive *covenant* between him and the Father?

You think this appears from four texts, 1. From that, *Thou gavest them to me*. Nay, when any believe, *the Father gives them to Christ*. But this proves no such previous contract. 2. *God hath laid upon him the iniquities of us all*. Neither does this prove any such thing. 3. That expression, *The counsel of peace shall be between them*, does not necessarily imply any more, than that both the Father and the Son would concur in the redemption of man. 4. *According to the counsel of his will*,—that is, in the way or method he had chosen. Therefore neither any of these texts, nor all of them, prove what they were brought to prove. They do by no means prove, that there ever was any such covenant made between the Father and the Son.

P. 301. (333.) “The *conditions* of the covenant are recorded, *Lo, I come to do thy will*.” Nay, here is no mention of any covenant, nor any thing from which it can be inferred. “The recompence stipulated in this glorious *treaty*”—But I see not one word of the treaty itself. Nor can I possibly allow the existence of it without far other proof than this. *Ibid.* (Note.) “Another copy of this grand *treaty* is recorded Isaiah xlix. from the first to the sixth verse.” I have read them, but cannot find a word about it, in all those verses. They contain neither more nor less than a prediction of the salvation of the Gentiles.

P. 302. (334.) “By the covenant of works, man was bound to obey *in his own person*.” And so he is under the covenant of grace; though not in order to his justification. “The obedience of our *Surety* is accepted instead of *our own*.” This is neither a safe nor a scriptural way of speaking. I would simply say, *We are accepted through the Beloved. We have redemption through his blood*.

P. 303. (335.) “The second covenant was not made with Adam, or any of his posterity, but with Christ, in those words, *The Seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent’s head*.” For any authority you have from these words, you might as well have said, It was made with the Holy Ghost. These words were not spoken *to* Christ, but *of* him, and give not the least intimation of any such *covenant* as you plead for. They manifestly contain, if not a covenant made with, a promise made to Adam and all his posterity.

P. 303. (335.) “Christ, we see, *undertook* to execute the conditions.” We see no such thing in this text. We see here only a promise of a Saviour, made by God to man.

Ibid. (335.) “It is true, I cannot fulfil the conditions.” It is not true. The conditions of the new covenant are, *Repent and believe*. And these you can fulfil, through Christ strengthening you. “It is equally true, this is not required at my hand.” It is *equally*

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true, that is, absolutely false. And most dangerously false. If we allow this, Antinomianism comes in with a full tide. "Christ has performed all that was *conditional* for me." Has he *repented* and *believed* for you? You endeavour to evade this by saying, "He performed all that was *conditional* in the *covenant of works*." This is nothing to the purpose; for we are not talking of that, but of the *covenant of grace*. Now he did not perform all that was *conditional* in this covenant, unless he repented and believed. "But he did unspeakably more." It may be so. But he did not do this.

P. 308. (340.) "But if Christ's *perfect obedience* be our's, we have no more need of pardon than Christ himself." The consequence is good. You have started an objection which you cannot answer. You say indeed, "Yes, we do need pardon; for *in many things we offend all*." What then, if his *obedience* be our's, we still *perfectly obey* in him.

P. 309. (341.) "Both the branches of the Law, the *preceptive* and the *penal*, in the case of guilt contracted, must be satisfied." Not so. "Christ by his death alone, (so our church teaches) fully satisfied for the sins of the whole world." The same great truth is manifestly taught in the thirty-first Article. Is it therefore fair, is it honest, for any one to plead the Articles of our Church in defence of absolute predestination? Seeing the seventeenth Article barely *defines* the term, without either affirming or denying the thing: whereas the thirty-first totally overthrows and razes it from the foundation.

Ibid. (342.) "Believers who are notorious transgressors *in themselves*, have a sinless obedience *in Christ*." O Siren Song!—Pleasing sound, to James Wheatley! Thomas Williams! James Reiley!

I know not one sentence in the Eleventh Dialogue, which is liable to exception: but that grand doctrine of Christianity, Original Sin, is therein proved by irrefragable arguments.

The Twelfth likewise is unexceptionable, and contains such an illustration of the wisdom of God in the structure of the human body, as I believe cannot be paralleled, in either ancient or modern writers.

The former part of the Thirteenth Dialogue is admirable. To the latter, I have some objections.

Vol. II. P. 44. (47.) "Elijah failed in his resignation, and even Moses spake unadvisedly with his lips." It is true: but if you could likewise fix some blot upon venerable Samuel and beloved Daniel, it would prove nothing. For no scripture teaches, that the holiness of Christians is to be measured by that of any Jew.

P. 46. (Note, 49.) "Do not the *best* of men frequently feel dis-

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order in their affections; do not they often complain, *When I would do good, evil is present with me?* I believe not. You and I are only able to answer for ourselves. "Do not they say, *We groan, being burthened,*—with the workings of inbred corruption?" You know this is not the meaning of the text. The whole context shews, the cause of their groaning was their longing *to be with Christ.*

P. 47. (50.) "The cure" of sin "will be perfected in heaven." Nay surely, in Paradise, if not sooner. "This is a noble prerogative of the beatific vision." No: it would then come too late. If sin remains in us till the day of judgment, it will remain for ever. "Our present blessedness does not consist in being *free from sin.*" I really think it does. But whether it does or not, if we are not *free from sin*, we are not Christian believers. For to all these the apostle declares, *Being made free from sin, ye are become servants of righteousness*, Rom. vi. 18.

"If we were perfect in piety, (St. John's words is, *perfect in love*,) Christ's priestly office would be superseded." No: we should still need his Spirit (and consequently his intercession) for the continuance of that love from moment to moment. Besides, we should still be encompassed with infirmities, and liable to mistakes, from which words and actions might follow, even though the heart were all love, which were not exactly right. Therefore in all these respects we should still have need of Christ's priestly office: and therefore as long as he remains in the body, the greatest saint may say,

Every moment, Lord, I need,
The merit of thy death.

The text cited from Exodus asserts nothing less than that *iniquity* "cleaves to all *our holy things* till death."

P. 48. (50.) "Sin remains, that the righteousness of faith may have its due honour." And will the righteousness of faith have its due honour no longer than sin remains in us? Then it must remain, not only on earth and in Paradise, but in heaven also.—"And the sanctification of the Spirit, its proper esteem." Would it not have more esteem, if it were a perfect work?

Ibid. (51.) "It (sin) will make us lowly in our own eyes." What, will pride make us lowly? Surely the utter destruction of pride would do this more effectually. "It will make us compassionate." Would not an entire renewal in the image of God make us much more so? "It will teach us to admire the riches of grace." Yea, but a fuller experience of it, by a thorough sanctification of spirit, soul, and body, will make us admire it more. "It will reconcile us to death." Indeed it will not: nor will any thing do this like perfect love.

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P. 49. (52.) "It will endear the blood and intercession of Christ." Nay, these can never be so dear to any, as to those who experience their full virtue, who are *filled with the fulness of God*. Nor can any "feel their continual need" of Christ, or "rely on him" in the manner which these do.

Dialogue 14. P. 57. (61.) "The claims of the Law are all answered." If so, Count Zinzendorf is absolutely in the right: neither God nor man can claim my obedience to it. Is not this Antinomianism without a mask?

P. 59. (62.) "Your sins are expiated through the death of Christ, and a *righteousness given you*, by which you have free access to God." This is not scriptural language. I would simply say, *By him we have access to the Father*.

There are many other expressions in this Dialogue, to which I have the same objection, namely, 1. That they are unscriptural. 2. That they directly lead to Antinomianism.

The first Letter contains some very useful heads of self-examination. In the second,

P. 91. (Note, 93, 94.) I read, "There is a *righteousness* which supplies all that the creature needs. To prove this *momentous* point, is the design of the following sheets."

I have seen such terrible effects of this unscriptural way of speaking, even on those *who had once clean escaped from the pollutions of the world*, that I cannot but earnestly wish, you would speak no otherwise than do the oracles of God. Certainly this *mode of expression* is not *momentous*. It is always *dangerous*, often *fatal*.

Letter III. P. 93. (96.) "Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound; that as sin had reigned unto death, so might grace—the free love of God—reign through righteousness, through our justification and sanctification, unto eternal life," Rom. v. 20, 21. This is the plain, natural meaning of the words. It does not appear, that one word is spoken here about *imputed righteousness*: neither in the passages cited in the next page, from the Common Prayer and the Article. In the Homily, likewise, that phrase is not found at all, and the main stress is laid on *Christ's shedding his blood*. Nor is the *phrase* (concerning the thing, there is no question) found in any part of the Homilies.

P. 101. (103.) "If the fathers are not explicit with regard to the imputation of *active* righteousness, they abound in passages which evince the *substitution* of Christ in our stead: passages which disclaim all dependence on any duties of our own, and fix our hopes wholly on the *merits* of our Saviour. When this is the case, I am very little solicitous about any *particular forms of expression*." O lay aside, then, those questionable, dangerous forms, and keep closely to the scriptural.

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Letter IV. P. 105. (107.) "The authority of our Church and of those eminent divines," does not touch those *particular forms of expression*: neither do any of the texts which you afterwards cite. As to the doctrine, we are agreed.

Ibid. (107.) "The righteousness of God signifies, the righteousness which God-Man wrought out." No. It signifies God's method of justifying sinners.

P. 107. (109.) "The victims figured the *expiation* by Christ's death; the clothing with skins, the *imputation* of his righteousness." That does not appear. Did not the one rather figure our justification, the other our sanctification?

P. 109. (112.) Almost every text quoted in this and the following Letter, in support of that *particular form of expression*, is distorted above measure from the plain, obvious meaning, which is pointed out by the context. I shall instance in a few, and just set down their true meaning, without any farther remarks.

To *shew unto man his uprightness*. To convince him of God's justice, in so punishing him.

P. 110. (114.) *He shall receive the blessing—pardon—from the Lord, and righteousness—holiness—from the God of his salvation*, the God who saveth him both from the guilt and from the power of sin.

P. 111. (114.) *I will make mention of thy righteousness only.—Of thy mercy.*—So the word frequently means in the Old Testament. So it unquestionably means in that text, *In (or by) thy righteousness shall they be exalted.*

P. 112. (116.) *Sion shall be redeemed with judgment—after severe punishment—and her converts with righteousness—*with the tender mercy of God, following that punishment.

P. 113. (117.) *In (or through) the Lord I have righteousness and strength*, justification and sanctification. *He hath clothed me with the garments of salvation*,—saved me from the guilt and power of sin: both of which are again expressed by, *He hath covered me with a robe of righteousness.*

P. 114. (119.) *My righteousness—my mercy—shall not be abolished.*

P. 116. (120.) *To make reconciliation for iniquity—to atone for all our sins—and to bring in everlasting righteousness*, spotless holiness into our souls. And this righteousness is not *human* but *divine*. It is the gift and work of God.

P. 117. (121.) *The Lord our righteousness*—The Author both of our justification and sanctification.

P. 127. (132.) "What righteousness shall give us peace at the last day, inherent or imputed?" Both. Christ died for us and lives in us, *that we may have boldness in the day of judgment.*

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Letter V. P. 131. (136.) *That have obtained like precious faith through the righteousness—the mercy—of our Lord. Seek ye the kingdom of God and his righteousness—the holiness which springs from God reigning in you.*

P. 132. (136.) *Therein is revealed the righteousness of God—God's method of justifying sinners.*

P. 135. (139.) “*We establish the Law, as we expect no salvation without a perfect conformity to it—namely, by Christ.*” Is not this a mere quibble? And a quibble, which after all the laboured evasions of Witsius and a thousand more, does totally *make void the Law*? But not so does St. Paul teach. According to him *without holiness, personal holiness, no man shall see the Lord.* None who is not *himself* conformed to the Law of God here, *shall see the Lord* in glory.

This is the grand, palpable objection to that whole scheme. It directly *makes void the law.* It makes thousands content to live and die *transgressors of the law*, because Christ fulfilled it *for them.* Therefore, though I believe he hath *lived and died* for me, yet I would speak very tenderly and sparingly of the former, (and never, separately from the latter,) even as sparingly as do the Scriptures, for fear of this dreadful consequence.

P. 138. (143.) “*The gift of righteousness* must signify a righteousness not their own.” Yes, it signifies the righteousness or holiness which God gives to and works in them.

P. 139. (144.) “*The obedience of one* is Christ's actual performance of the whole law.” So here his passion is fairly left out! Whereas his *becoming obedient unto death*, that is, dying for man, is certainly the chief, if not the whole, which is meant by that expression.

Ibid. (144.) “*That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us—that is, by our Representative in our nature.*” Amazing! But this, you say, “*agrees with the tenor of the apostle's arguing.* For he is demonstrating we cannot be justified by our own conformity to the law.” No: not here. He is not speaking here of the *cause* of our justification, but the *fruits* of it. Therefore that unnatural sense of his words does not at all “*agree with the tenor of his arguing.*”

P. 140. (Note, 144.) I totally deny the criticism on *δικαιοσύνη* and *δικαιώματα*, and cannot conceive on what authority it is founded. O how deep an aversion to inward holiness does this scheme naturally create!

P. 142. (146.) “*The righteousness they attained could not be any personal righteousness.*” Certainly it was. It was *implanted* as well as *imputed.*

P. 145. (150.) “*For instruction in righteousness, in the righ-*

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teousness of Christ." Was there ever such a comment before? The plain meaning is, *For training up in holiness of heart and life.*

P. 146. (150.) *He shall convince the world of righteousness—* that I am not a sinner, but innocent and holy.

P. 148. (153.) "*That we might be made the righteousness of God in him. Not intrinsically, but imputatively.*" Both the one and the other. God *through him*, first *accounts* and then *makes us righteous.* Accordingly,

P. 152. (157.) *The righteousness which is of God by faith, is both imputed and inherent.*

P. 153. (158.) "*My faith fixes on them both, the meritorious life and atoning death of Christ.*" Here we clearly agree. Hold then to this, and never talk of the former without the latter. If you do, you cannot say, "*Here we are exposed to no hazard.*" (159.) Yes, you are to an exceeding great one: even the hazard of living and dying without holiness. And then we are lost for ever.

The sixth Letter contains an admirable account of the earth and its atmosphere, and comprises abundance of sense in a narrow compass, and expressed in beautiful language.

P. 177. (183.) Gems have "*a seat on the virtuous fair one's breast.*" I cannot reconcile this with St. Paul. He says, *Not with pearls:* by a parity of reason, *Not with diamonds.* But in all things, I perceive, you are too favourable, both to *the desire of the flesh* and *the desire of the eye.* You are a gentle casuist as to every self-indulgence which a plentiful fortune can furnish.

P. 182. (188.) "*Our Saviour's obedience.*"—O say with the good old Puritans, our Saviour's *death or merits.* We swarm with Antinomians on every side. Why are you at such pains to increase their number?

P. 194. (201.) *My mouth shall shew forth thy righteousness and thy salvation—thy mercy which brings my salvation.*

The Eighth Letter is an excellent description of the supreme greatness of Christ. I do not observe one sentence in it, which I cannot cheerfully subscribe to.

The Ninth Letter, containing a description of the sea, with various inferences deduced therefrom, is likewise a master-piece, for justness of sentiment, as well as beauty of language. But I doubt whether, "*mere shrimps,*" p. 241, (254,) be not too low an expression: and whether you might not as well have said nothing of "*cod, the standing repast of Lent:*" or concerning "*the exquisite relish of turbot, or the deliciousness of sturgeon.*" Are not such observations beneath the dignity of a minister of Christ? I have the same doubt concerning what is said, p. 264, (274,) of "*delicately flavoured tea, finely scented coffee; the friendly bowl,*

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the pyramid of Italian figs, and the pistachio nut of Aleppo." Beside that, the mentioning these in such a manner is a strong encouragement of luxury and sensuality. And does the world need this? The *English* in particular? *Si non insaniunt satis suâ sponte, instiga.*

Letter X. P. 271. (283.) "Those treasures which spring from the imputation of *Christ's righteousness.*" Not a word of his *aton-ing blood*? Why do so many men love to speak of his righteousness rather than his atonement? I fear, because it affords a fairer excuse for their own unrighteousness. To cut off this, is it not better, to mention both together? At least never to name the former without the latter?

P. 285. (298.) "Faith is a persuasion that Christ has shed his blood *for me*, and fulfilled all righteousness *in my stead.*" I can by no means subscribe to this definition. There are hundreds, yea, thousands of true believers, who never once thought one way or the other, of Christ's fulfilling all righteousness *in their stead.* I personally know many, who to this very hour have no idea of it; and yet have each of them a divine evidence and conviction, *Christ loved me, and gave himself for me.* This is St. Paul's account of faith: and it is sufficient. He that *thus* believes is justified.

P. 287. (299.) "It is a *sure* means of purifying the heart, and *never fails* to work by love." It *surely* purifies the heart—if we *abide in it*; but not if we *draw back to perdition.* It *never fails* to work by love, while it continues; but if itself fail, farewell both love and good works.

"Faith is the hand which receives all that is laid up in Christ." Consequently, if we *make shipwreck of the faith*, how much soever is laid up in Christ, from that hour we receive nothing.

Letter XI. P. 288. (301.) "Faith in the *imputed righteousness* of Christ, is a fundamental principle in the gospel." If so, what becomes of all those who think nothing about *imputed righteousness*? How many who are full of faith and love, if this be true, must perish everlastingly!

P. 297. (312.) "Thy hands must urge the way of the deadly weapon through the shivering flesh, till it be plunged in the throbbing heart." Are not these descriptions far too strong? May they not occasion unprofitable reasonings in many readers?

Ne puerum coram populo Media trucidet.

P. 298. (312.) "How can he *justify* it to the world?" Not at all. Can this then *justify his faith* to the world?

P. 304. (319.) "You take the certain way to obtain comfort, the righteousness of Jesus Christ." What, without the atonement? Strange fondness for an unscriptural, dangerous *mode of expression!*

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P. 306. (321.) So the merits of Christ are derived to all the faithful." Rather the fruits of the Spirit: which are likewise plainly typified by the oil in Zechariah's vision.

P. 310. (326.) "Has the law any demand? It must go to him for satisfaction." Suppose, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." Then I am not obliged to love my neighbour. *Christ* has satisfied the demands of the Law *for me*. Is not this the very quintessence of Antinomianism?

P. 311. (327.) "The righteousness wrought out by Jesus Christ, is wrought out for *all his people*, to be *the cause of their justification*, and *the purchase of their salvation*." *The righteousness* is the cause, the purchase. So the *death* of Christ is not so much as named! "For *all his people*." But what becomes of *all other people*? They *must inevitably* perish for ever. The die was cast or ever they were in being. The doctrine to *pass them by*, has

Consign'd their unborn souls to hell,
And dami'd them from their mother's womb!

I could sooner be a Turk, a Deist, yea, an Atheist, than I could believe this. It is less absurd to deny the very being of God, than to make him an Almighty Tyrant.

P. 318. (334.) "The whole world, and all its seasons, are rich with our Creator's goodness. His tender mercies are over all his works." Are they over the bulk of mankind? Where is his goodness to the non-elect? How are his tender mercies over *them*? "His temporal blessings are given *to them*." But are they to them blessings at all? Are they not all curses? Does not God *know* they are? That they will only increase their damnation? Does not he *design* they should? And this you call *goodness*! This is *tender mercy*!

P. 321. (336.) "May we not discern pregnant proofs of goodness in each individual object?" No; on your scheme not a spark of it in this world or the next, to the far greater part of the work of his own hands!

P. 334. (350.) "Is God a generous Benefactor to the meanest animals, to the lowest reptiles? And will he deny my friend what is necessary to his present comfort, and his final acceptance?" Yea, will he deny it to any soul that he has made? Would *you* deny it to any, if it were in *your* power?

But if you *lov'd* whom God abhorr'd,
The servant were above his Lord.

P. 337. (353.) The *wedding-garment* here means holiness.

P. 340. (356.) "This is his *tender* complaint, They *will not come* unto me!" Nay, that is not the case; they *cannot*. He

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himself has *decreed*, not to give them that grace without which their coming is impossible!

(357.) "The grand end which God proposes in all his favourable dispensations to fallen man, is to demonstrate the sovereignty of his grace." Not so: to impart happiness to his creatures, is his grand end herein. "Barely to demonstrate his sovereignty," is a principle of action fit for the great Turk, not the Most High God.

P. 341. (357.) "God hath pleasure in the prosperity of his servants. He is a boundless Ocean of good." Nay, that ocean is far from boundless, if it wholly passes by nine-tenths of mankind.

P. 342. (359.) "You cannot suppose God would enter into a fresh covenant with a rebel." I both suppose and know he did. "God made the new covenant with *Christ*, and charged him with the performances of the conditions." I deny both these assertions, which are the central point wherein Calvinism and Antinomianism meet. "*I have made a covenant with my chosen.*"—Namely, with *David my servant*. So God himself explains it.

P. 362. (382.) "He will wash you in the blood which atones, and invest you with the righteousness which justifies." Why should you thus continually put asunder what God has joined?

P. 440. (487.) "God himself at the last day pronounces them righteous, because they are interested in the obedience of the Redeemer." Rather, because they are washed in his blood, and renewed by his Spirit.

Upon the whole, I cannot but wish that the plan of these Dialogues had been executed in a different manner. Most of the grand truths of Christianity are herein both explained and proved with great strength and clearness. Why was any thing intermixed, which could prevent any serious Christian's recommending them to all mankind? Any thing which must necessarily render them exceptionable to so many thousands of the children of God? In practical writings I studiously abstain from the very shadow of controversy. Nay, even in controversy, I do not knowingly write one line, to which any but my opponent would object. For *Opinions* shall I destroy the work of God? Then am I a bigot indeed. Much more if I would not drop any *mode of expression*, rather than offend either Jew or Gentile, or the church of God.

I am, with great sincerity, Dear Sir,

Your affectionate Brother and Servant,

J. WESLEY.

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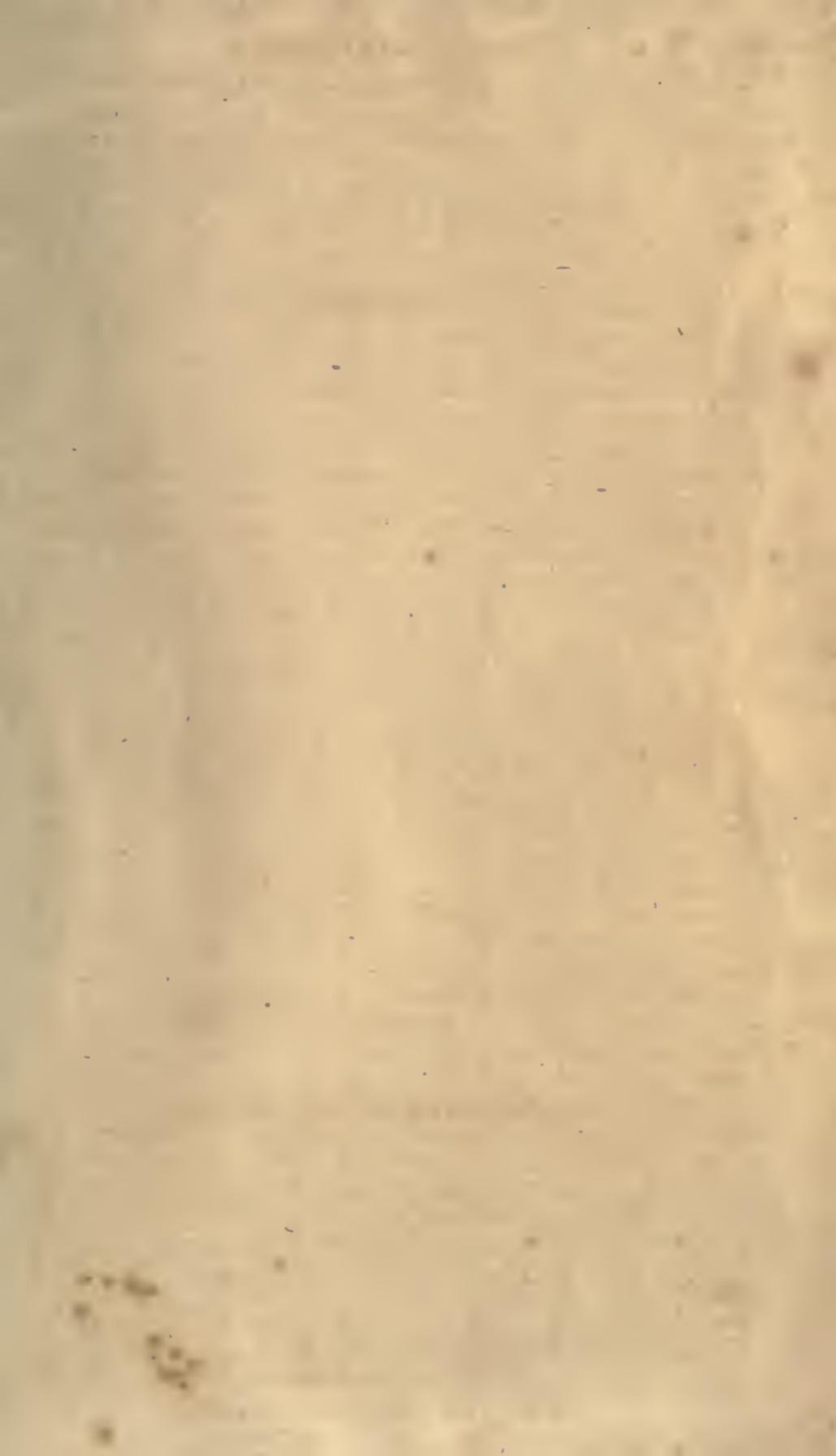
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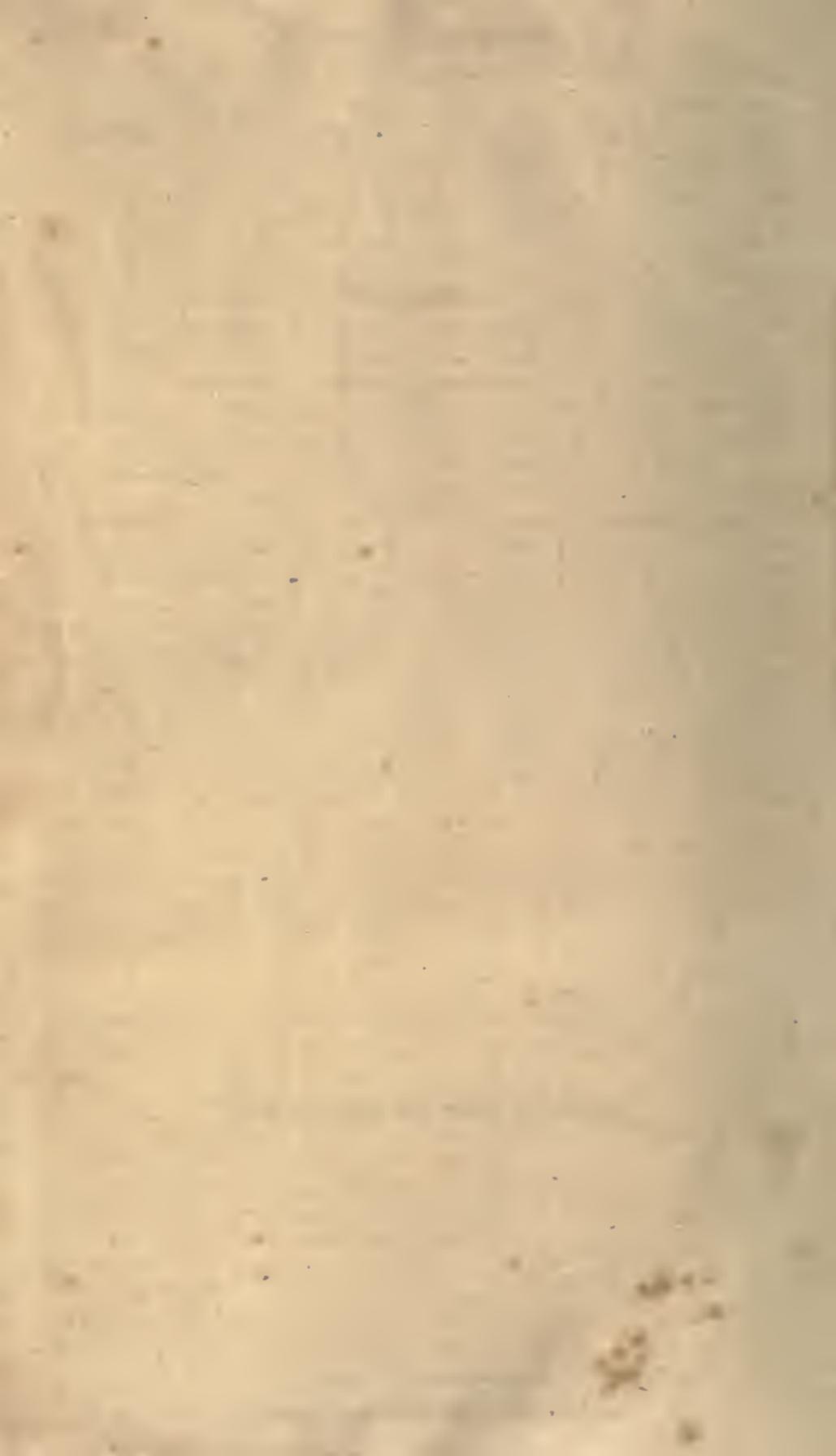
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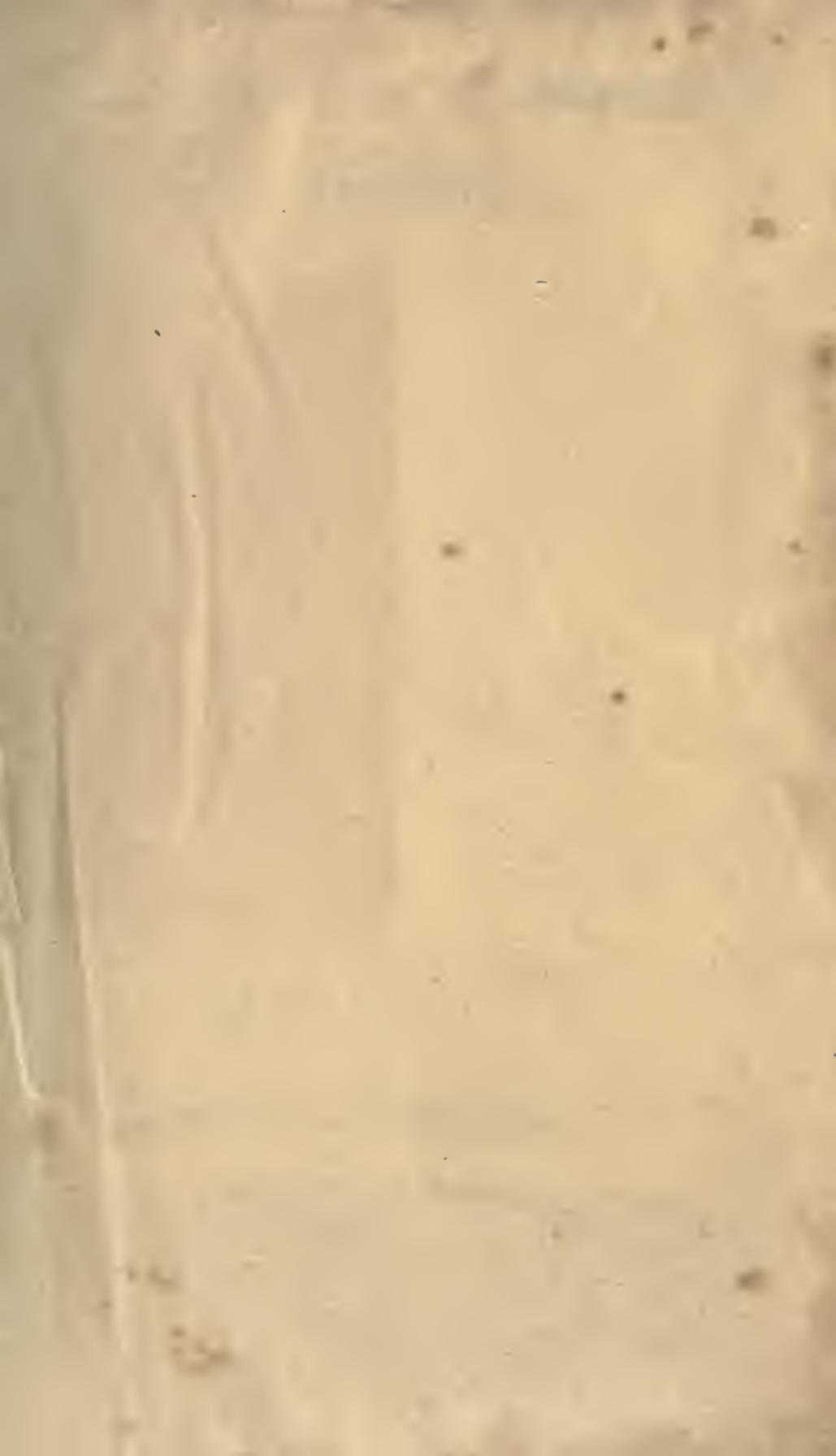
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